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A Biography of Luis N. Morones, Mexican Labor and Political Leader.

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A BIOGRAPHY OF LUIS N. MORONES, MEXICAN LABOR
AND POLITICAL LEADER

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

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ABSTRACT

Luis N. Morones, the subject of this biography, is not the lackluster, insipid individual who fills countless pages of history books. This fascinating and complex man led a thrilling life during the 1920's and 1930's in Mexico. An electrician well-acquainted with the problems of the exploited laboring classes, he founded the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM), the first significant workers' central to be established in Mexico. Sentenced to death by President Venustiano Carranza for his part in a general strike in 1916, Morones was released from his death cell before his scheduled execution. Eight years later, while serving as a Federal Deputy, Morones was almost fatally wounded in a gunfight which occurred in the Chamber of Deputies.

Morones' tenure as Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labor, 1924-28, included exciting and momentous events -- the Cristero Rebellion of the Roman Catholics, the heated controversy with the United States over President Plutarco Calles' contemplated seizure of foreign petroleum companies in Mexico, and the assassination of President-Elect Alvaro Obregón. The petroleum difficulty precipitated a possible armed intervention and invasion of Mexico by the United States.

Realizing that politics was not an exercise in civics-book morality, Morones acted accordingly. He was surrounded by a group of "yes men" of the elite Grupo Acción and even organized Mexico

City prostitutes, whom he perhaps visualized as a source of union dues. He had an unconcealed disdain for manual labor and a love of luxury. Frugality was not a trait of this bon vivant who became immensely rich through graft and collusion. Believing the interests of labor and his own to be one and the same, he applied this principle to the CROM treasury. Reminiscent of a Chicago gangster par excellence during the prohibition era, this well-groomed, pistol-toting, diamond bedecked labor czar kept an arsenal in his home and ministry office, rode in costly bullet-proof automobiles, and had opposition congressmen kidnapped or gunned down in the streets. He achieved a position of power unparalleled in Mexican labor history in that from 1920 to 1929 he was labor personified. At the same time, his name became synonymous with crime, violence, venality, and corruption.

Few persons were indifferent to Morones. He was one of those men who inspired fierce loyalty or undying animosity. A charismatic leader and a man of action, he was (partly as a result of his thirst for power and mounting political ambition) accused of being the intellectual author of the assassinations of two men: Juan Field Jurado, Senator from Campeche, and Alvaro Obregón, President-Elect of Mexico in 1928. Morones was also blamed for complicity in the dynamiting of a passenger train carrying rival politicians in 1936. Partly because of this alleged crime he was exiled to the United States.

Due to Morones' capacity as an organizer, personal magnetism, ability as a speaker, and valor as a leader, he was interesting to observe in action. He was highly emotional and prone to performing

dramatically before audiences. Because of his numerous confrontations with political foes, he was the target of several assassination attempts. Considering his numerous enemies and the political mores of Mexico during the 1920's when Morones and his CROM were at the apogee of their power, his natural death is ironic.

INTRODUCTION

Without a knowledge of labor there can be no real understanding of the substantial role labor has played and continues to play in Latin American politics. Although we need more work in the field of labor history, this study is neither a history of the Mexican labor movement nor of the CROM. Much labor history has been included, however, in order to give proper perspective to Morones' life. The story of his rise is intimately linked with the growth of organized Mexican labor, yet so many individuals were involved with that development that it would be inaccurate to consider Morones more than a contributing factor to it. Nevertheless, one must not underestimate the importance of his role in this respect.

Since there is no comprehensive or authoritative biography of Morones, this study is undertaken to shed more light on this controversial person. It is not intended to cover all aspects of this complex man. The writer has attempted to be as objective and detached as possible, a seemingly rare characteristic of other accounts of Morones' life, since they are distorted by partisanship. A study of Morones must show his involvement in Mexico's politics, petroleum problems, and her Church-State crises during the twelve years, 1918-30, that CROM was powerful. As a rule, studies in economics and political science only mention Morones in connection with this period; and consequently there are large gaps in his biography. This dissertation, based largely on data

gathered during field research in Mexico, attempts to supplement this early period, and to correct the oversimplified portrayals of Morones as a man who devoted his life only to the labor movement.

In spite of the fact that most of his private papers are not available, enough data from personal interviews and other sources have been collected to reconstruct his private life. The following materials have been utilized: (1) Mexican and United States government documents and publications; (2) books and articles; (3) encyclopedias and dictionaries; (4) Argentine, English, Mexican, and United States newspapers; (5) Masters' and Ph.D. theses written in United States universities; (6) interviews in 1968, 1970, and 1971 with individuals personally acquainted with Morones (including, among others, his widow, Señora Berta Peña Viuda de Morones; one of his sons, Luis Enrique Morones Peña, his personal secretary for twenty-seven years, José Ortiz Petricioli; Carleton Beals; an American journalist and historian, and ex-president Emilio Portes Gil, one of Morones' persistent critics and bitter adversaries); (7) various photograph archives in Mexico City, (8) and the writer's personal correspondence with American and Mexican historians.¹ Since Morones died in 1964, four years before the idea of this biography was conceived, none of the conferences was with him. However, his speeches and

¹Unless otherwise specified, all Mexican newspapers cited are from Mexico City. Personal correspondence which is located in the Louisiana State University Department of Archives and Manuscripts will be listed merely as "L.S.U. Archives."

writings which appeared in newspapers, Ministry publications, and in official CROM organs have formed a major segment of the source material. Primary sources also include some of Morones' personal correspondence, and the writings and memoirs of many of his friends and enemies. A few of these include José Petricioli, Ricardo Treviño, Samuel Gompers, Carleton Beals, Frank Tannenbaum, Ernest Gruening, Vito Alessio Robles, Serafino Romauldi, José Zuno, Emilio Portes Gil, Luis Araiza, Rosendo Salazar, Alberto Pani, and Vicente Lombardo Toledano. Some of these writings are so charged with rancor that they are unreliable and must be used with caution. Newspapers also are not always accurate, but they have been checked against each other and against official records, and constitute a valuable source of important details.

CHAPTER I

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN LABOR MOVEMENT TO 1911

A change of great importance for Mexico is the surprisingly rapid mass organization of its working population. This growth has occurred in a country where organization and collective action on the part of the masses were unknown before 1911. The fact that powerful trade unions and political labor movements should exist in early twentieth-century Mexico, which was so largely agricultural in nature, is somewhat a paradox. Industry was underdeveloped, the masses illiterate, and the Roman Catholic Church with its tremendous hold on the people was vigilant in obstructing theories that might upset the traditional status of the lower classes.

Although there were beginnings of an organized labor movement as early as the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the most important group, the Gran Círculo de Obreros (Grand Circle of Workers), was not founded until 1876. The usual forms of unionism were mutualistic societies -- ostensibly for educational, social, and burial purposes. These societies existed as weak and isolated groups which broke and reformed repeatedly, and exerted little influence outside their own local spheres.

PORFIRIO DIAZ'S LABOR POLICY, 1876-1910

President Díaz stressed the industrialization of Mexico. He invited foreign capital into the country. Railroads were built

and factories appeared. One of the favorable terms Díaz promised foreigners was a docile and cheap labor force. By the later 1880's his regime no longer tolerated the opposition and political "sedition" represented by the labor movement. Its press was suppressed, and the labor organizations themselves found it increasingly difficult to pursue their activities.

The most outstanding labor events during the years preceding the Revolution were two strikes in 1907 both led by adherents of Ricardo Flores Magón, who sought to overthrow Díaz by means of a huelga general. These occurred in the important Cananea copper mines in the North and among the textile workers of Puebla in the South. Although the workers lost these strikes, they contributed considerably to the development of labor discontent during Díaz's rule, revealing that the president vigorously opposed any action which disturbed the social or economic order.

FRANCISCO MADERO AND LABOR

Since one of Francisco Madero's goals was the advancement of labor, there was widespread support among the workers for the revolutionary movement launched by him in 1910. The working class in the early revolutionary period was a main source of military manpower. It provided capable fighters who, unlike the peasants, were concentrated in strategic urban areas. Madero's forces did bring about the overthrow of Díaz; and the liberal policies of the Madero government, 1911-13, permitted labor to organize. In December, 1911, President Madero created a Labor Office to carry

out needed studies of the workers' condition and to intervene in industrial disputes. In eight months this office contributed to the settlement of seventy strikes.

CASA DEL OBRERO MUNDIAL

The first group to give any semblance of coherence to the Mexican labor movement was the Casa del Obrero Mundial, or House of the World's Workers. The Casa was not a labor union, but its aid in later union development is of importance. It served as a meeting place where ideas were exchanged and developed, and where propaganda pamphlets were prepared and disseminated to other parts of the country. Thus, to organize and coordinate the labor movement in Mexico, these first leaders were obliged to experiment in forms of organization, to theorize, learn, and study existing conditions.

Founded in Tampico in September, 1912, by a group of foreign and Mexican left-wing intellectuals, the Casa's guiding voices were Mikhail Bakunin and Pierre Proudhon rather than Karl Marx.¹ The Casa soon evidenced tendencies to: (1) depend on the government for meeting places, money, and assistance in conflicts with employers; (2) rely on legislation as a means of protecting the interests of organized labor; and (3) support anarcho-syndicalist methods of direct violent action, such as sabotage and the general

¹Harvey A. Levenstein, "The United States Labor Movement and Mexico, 1910-1951" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1966), 22. Bakunin's principal tenets were destruction of the state and ultraindividualistic rights.

strike.² Anarcho-syndicalism begins with the assumption that private property and the capitalistic system are responsible for man's material anguish and sufferings. Inasmuch as capitalism is inherently evil, the anarcho-syndicalist concludes that the worker and employer can never have any common interests. In order to defeat capitalism and accomplish a fundamental transformation of society and the economy, the worker must be prepared to use direct action -- bombing, dynamiting, arson, murder, terror, single or partial strikes, the general strike, boycott, slow-down (sometimes called hacer la perra in Mexico), and sabotage.³

The Casa's founders wanted to reduce working class aims to concrete doctrine and dispatch agents throughout the country to organize the proletariat into unions instilled with class consciousness. Once established in revolutionary unions, the workers would be in a position to use their economic power in forming a general strike to topple the entire bourgeois capitalist economic and political structure and to replace it with an anarcho-syndicalist state based on the ownership by the workers of the factories and farms.

Although the Casa's leaders were at first sympathetic to President Madero, many soon became disillusioned with him. When the Casa urged upon Madero the necessity for a broad program of legislation on behalf of the working classes, he apparently had

²William S. Stokes, Latin American Politics (New York, 1959), 240.

³Ibid., 235.

little realization of the force of social protest which had been released by the overthrow of Díaz. He thus failed to enact the reform programs which were being pressed upon him in labor relations by the Casa and in the agrarian field by Emiliano Zapata, an important revolutionary leader operating southwest of Mexico City. Zapata was seizing and distributing estates of large landholders among landless peasants. Consequently, there were some strikes during Madero's administration. Although at first giving the Casa full freedom to conduct its activities, Madero tended to become impatient with it in the last months of his rule, fearing its radicalism and the introduction into the labor ranks of foreign influence and doctrines.⁴

⁴Marjorie Ruth Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico (Chapel Hill, 1934), 24. This scholarly monograph treating pre-C.T.M. developments continues to be the standard work on the Mexican labor movement.

CHAPTER II

EARLY CAREER AND PRE-CROM PERIOD

BIRTH

Ignacio Morones and Rafaela Negrete, two weavers in the cotton factory of Atemajac near Guadalajara, Jalisco, were married in La Capilla de Jesús in the state capital in 1888. Since there was little opportunity for economic advancement in Guadalajara, Morones, his wife, and other textile workers quit their jobs in the mills of Atemajac, La Experiencia, and El Batán and moved to work in the factory of San Fernando de Tlalpan near Mexico City. In honor of their abandoned and beloved city, they named their neighborhood El Barrio de Guadalajarita. At 10:00 P.M. on October 11, 1890, Rafaela gave birth to a son in her home. The infant was named Luis Morones Negrete.

EDUCATION

Following the closing of San Fernando in 1895 because of economic difficulties, a majority of the workers returned to Jalisco. Choosing not to return to his native state, Ignacio moved his family to Mexico City where they lived in a small house for which he paid eight pesos rent monthly. Since Ignacio's earnings were insufficient to support his wife and son, Rafaela supplemented the family's income by selling arroz con leche and other snacks in the vestibule of their home.

Luis was the only offspring of Ignacio and Rafaela, and his nine maternal aunts took special interest in him. They attempted to satisfy many of the youth's material needs but did not spoil him with numerous gifts.¹ Because of his aunts, Luis was able to attend a primary school near his home until he reached the sixth grade level. Later he studied shorthand and typing in a nearby institute on Las Escalerillas Street. Although Morones disliked these skills and never used them during the rest of his life, this opportunity enabled him to receive some instruction beyond a rudimentary education.

EARLY LABOR AGITATION

At age seventeen, despite his father's wishes that he be a weaver, Luis was earning wages at an electrician's shop. A facsimile of his electrician's card states that Luis N. Morones could repair "all types of motors and electrical apparatus" in a shop located at Puente de San Antonio, No. 10.²

¹Luis Araiza, Historia del movimiento obrero mexicano (4 vols.; México, D.F., 1964-1965), III, 190; José Ortiz Petricioli, El compañero Morones: biografía de un gran líder (México, D.F., 1968), 18, 29.

²Beginning in 1907 Luis Morones Negrete began using the initial "N" between his Christian name and his surname. José Petricioli, Morones' private secretary for 27 years, states that this practice caused numerous writers and politicians to err about the motivation for the change. Some did it in good faith, some from ignorance, others deliberately to attack Morones. Petricioli, El compañero Morones, 37. Felipe López Rosado, for example, in his El hombre y la economía states, "Luis Napoleón Morones era visto con deslumbrantes joyas y se hablaba de orgías en su quinta de Tlalpan." Ibid., 38-39. Victor Alba in his Historia del movimiento obrero en América Latina (México, D.F., 1964), 444 likewise erred about Morones' name. Alba writes, "La C.R.O.M. está dirigida en

Morones' early years were ones of self-education in the school of hard knocks and trial and error. In his youth he devoted much attention to listening and learning and developed an interest in social and labor problems. Morones joined the Casa in 1913. At

realidad, por el Grupo Acción, congregado en torno a Luis Napoleón Morones." Alba's Politics and the Labor Movement (Stanford, 1968), contains this and other minor errors about Morones, 307. In Morones' obituary in Tiempo: semanario de la vida y la verdad, his name is given as "Luis Napoleón Morones Negrete," (April 13, 1964), 33; and the labor leader is listed in the Diccionario enciclopedia, U.T.E.H.A. as "Morones, (Luis Napoleón)," (Mexico, D.F., 1952), 787. Others have interpreted the initial "N" as meaning Nepomuceno, Nicandro, or since Morones was born on October 11 as Nicasio, the saint's name for that date. Inigo Medina in Morones' obituary wrote of "Luis Nicasio Morones," Las Novedades, April 6, 1964. One prominent American Mexicanist accidentally listed the labor leader as "Luis G. Morones." Howard F. Cline, The United States and Mexico (Cambridge, 1963), 193, 479. This mistake was probably a typographical error because although Professor Cline never met Morones, he knew his name was Luis N. Morones. Howard F. Cline to Nick Buford, February 4, March 10, 1970, L.S.U. Archives. Petricioli explains that this confusion began because Morones, for caprice, euphony, or perhaps some other reason placed the "N" from Negrete between his Christian name and his surname. Petricioli, El compañero Morones, 40. Morones was once referred to as "Luis Eliseo Morones" by an opposition deputy. Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, XXX Legislatura, tomo III, No. 1, September 21, 1923, 3. Even though this name confusion is in itself trivial, it illustrates the difficulty of obtaining objective facts about Morones. Petricioli even claims that the name controversy is an example of one of the many "legends" surrounding Morones: one which is "filled with passion." José Petricioli, interview, Mexico City 19, 1968. In 1968 Petricioli published El compañero Morones, a rambling, partisan attempt at a biography based mainly on conversations with Morones instead of sound historical records. He devoted a brief chapter to the name problem, and as Petricioli explained about his sources, "La mayor parte de los datos que doy a conocer, me fueron platicados en diversas ocasiones por el propio compañero cuya biografía trato de hacer, y es posible que falten muchos aspectos que otros compañeros conocen, omitidos por mí al no conocerlos." El compañero Morones, preface; interviews, Mexico City, June 19, 25, 30, 1968.

the age of twenty-two, the youngest member in that organization, he was very active and spent time attempting to organize workers. By speaking to his fellow workers, he became popular and gradually worked himself through the ranks of the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas. Morones represented the S.M.E. in various labor federations. An ambitious man, he saw these union activities as a means to advance his political career.

VENUSTIANO CARRANZA AND LABOR

In January, 1913, President Francisco Madero was assassinated and General Victoriano Huerta seized the presidency in order to re-establish order. Huerta was obliged to employ violent methods -- methods which involved the execution and incarceration of many leaders of the trade and labor unions and the closing of the Casa in 1914. His successful coup d' état and ruthless practices united various conflicting elements in a struggle against his dictatorship. Huerta's three principal opponents were Venustiano Carranza, who was strongest in northeastern Mexico; Francisco Villa, in the Northwest; and Emiliano Zapata, in the Southwest.

By the last months of 1914, the anti-Huerta forces were victorious and occupied the capital. Temporarily all the major forces recognized the supremacy of Carranza, "a big, white-bearded man behind blue spectacles -- a calm iceberg of a man," as "First Chief" of the revolution.³ This victory was only the prelude to continued

³Carleton Beals, Glass Houses: Ten Years of Free-Lancing (Philadelphia, 1938), 22.

hostilities and Carranza soon faced further problems. The forces of Villa and Zapata aligned themselves against the president. These circumstances compelled the conservative Carranza to evolve a social program which would attract workers to his banner.

Carranza, in need of all the forces he could muster to break the power of Villa, delegated General Alvaro Obregón, principal leader of the Carranza forces, to negotiate with the labor unions of the Federal District for their help. A pact was drawn up in February, 1915, between the Casa, then the most powerful labor body in the country, and the government. It was agreed that the Casa would have governmental assurance of full freedom to carry on its organizational activities and establish unions among workers within the areas controlled by the carrancistas. In return, the labor leaders would recruit thousands of laborers from the capital to furnish "red batallions" to fight in the ranks of Carranza's troops. These contingents made an important contribution to the eventual military victory of the carrancistas. General Celestino Gasca, Samuel Yúdice and Salvador Álvarez, who were later important cromistas, fought with these red batallions.

Morones opposed the S.M.E. representative on a Casa steering committee who supported the formation of these units to aid Carranza.⁴ Morones did not trust Carranza and was not sure if he would win. Therefore, Morones avoided irrevocable commitment to the Constitution-
alists.

⁴La Prensa, February 21, 1915.

In 1915 when Obregón, Carranza's general, arrived in Mexico City, the S.M.E. was having a conflict with the Telegraph and Telephone Company. Inflation caused the telephone workers to grow more insistent in their demands for higher wages. After weeks of discussion with management about a wage increase, the union suddenly cut off all power in the Federal District on the morning of August 13, 1915. Five hours after the strike began, Morones met with a member of the government to discuss union demands. An offer from General Pablo González, senior military commander in the area, to pay a wage increase for a month pending further negotiations was rejected by the S.M.E. leadership.

The company was taken over by the government, and Morones was appointed to head the Telegraph and Telephone Company.⁵ He remained in the office only a few months and left under the charge of misappropriation of funds, which was never proved.⁶ This allegation was not the last time Morones was accused of corruption while serving in a public office; such complaints became commonplace in his later career.

Carranza, who had little conception of labor's potential, did not wish to create the impression that he was antagonistic to

⁵José Petricioli in El Excelsior, April 6, 1964; Luis N. Morones in Petricioli, El compañero Morones, 14; Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana, Memoria de los trabajos realizados por el H. Comité Central, durante el ejercicio comprendido del 1º. de agosto de 1963 a julio de 1965 (Mexico, D.F., 1965), 21. Hereinafter this CROM publication will be cited as "C.R.O.M. Memoria" and the appropriate year given.

⁶Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 58, 170.

capital, or rather, too friendly to organized labor. His flirtation with the latter was brief. After Obregón's military victories over Villa at León, Agua Prieta, Hermosillo, and Celaya, Carranza no longer needed labor's support and discouraged its development. With the Constitutionalist cause triumphant, the workers expected progressive changes. Not only did these fail to materialize, but with soaring costs resulting from the huge volume of paper money issued by the Constitutionalists, the workers found their economic condition worse than ever. Because of the consequent decline in real wages, labor called a general strike for higher wages in May, 1916.⁷ When this strike (which suspended telephone service, electric power, and streetcar operation) paralyzed Mexico City, Carranza pronounced the strike an act of aggression and treason against his government and made a half-century-old law decreeing capital punishment of highwaymen applicable to the strikers. Carranza also closed the Casa, which he had earlier endowed with lavish quarters, arrested many of its prominent leaders, and condemned them to death. One of the victims of his wrath was Morones. Obregón interceded and, by a timely reprieve, managed to obtain a commutation of the death sentence to a term in a military prison. Some leaders were forced to leave Mexico. Others like José Barragán Hernández, a typographer

⁷Ernest Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage (New York, 1928), 338; Victor Alba, The Mexicans: the Making of a Nation (New York, 1967), 145; Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico (3rd ed. rev.; Boston, 1960), 363.

and one of the ablest labor chiefs, were gunned down by government agents.⁸

Following his near fatal encounter with Carranza, Morones spent a brief time in Pachuca, Hidalgo. In 1916 the labor leader Pedro Rivera Flores was elected presidente municipal of this small silver-mining town. Remembering his old friend, Rivera appointed Morones secretary of the ayuntamiento. For a year Morones lived in this provincial community and continued his efforts to organize labor.⁹

SAMUEL GOMPERS AND MEXICAN LABOR

Morones' future ally, Samuel Gompers, first became cognizant of Mexican labor problems in 1883 when he worked at Stachelberg's making cigars with three Mexican cigarmakers. Through them he learned of the Mexican laborers' misfortunes, lack of material possessions, and "poorness of spirit," all of which appealed to his sympathy.¹⁰

⁸Alba, The Mexicans, 145; Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage, 338; Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America, 187; Nathaniel and Sylvania Weyl, The Reconquest of Mexico: the Years of Lázaro Cárdenas (London, 1939), 60; J. H. Retinger, Morones of Mexico: a History of the Labour Movement in that Country (London, 1926), 9-10. According to Retinger, the fact that Carranza relented was not due to any sudden sentimental change on his part, "but to the fact that even at that early date Morones and his friends were outstanding figures in Mexico and that Carranza feared the consequences of killing them." 9. He fails to substantiate this assertion.

⁹Retinger, Morones of Mexico, 10.

¹⁰Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor: an Autobiography (2 vols.; New York, 1948), II, 303-304.

Gompers wired Mexican labor organizations asking that they send delegates to El Paso for a labor conference. Twenty delegates were selected to meet with Gompers, Morones, and the impressionist painter Gerardo Murillo, or "Dr. Atl," were among them. On June 21, 1916, twelve American soldiers were killed and twenty-three captured in the skirmish with Carranza forces at El Carrizal. President Wilson issued an ultimatum calling for the release of the imprisoned American soldiers. Wilson called up the National Guard, and war seemed imminent. Morones and other delegates arrived in El Paso two days after the Carrizal clash for their conference with Gompers.

No reply from Carranza was received, so to avoid war these Mexican labor representatives telegraphed Gompers to wire an appeal to Carranza for the prisoners' release.¹¹ Gompers sent Mexico's president the following telegram on June 28:

In the name of common justice and humanity, in the interest of a better understanding between the peoples and the governments of the U.S. and Mexico, for the purpose of giving the opportunity to maintain peace and avoid the horrors of war, upon the grounds of highest patriotism and love, I appeal to you to release the American soldiers held by your officers in Chihuahua.¹²

The following day Gompers received a telegram from Carranza informing him that the Mexican government had ordered the freeing of the

¹¹American Federationist, August, 1966, 633-638.

¹²William C. Roberts, comp., American Federation of Labor: History, Encyclopedia and Reference Book (2 vols.; Washington, 1919), I, 287.

Americans whom the Mexicans had taken captive at El Carrizal. Carranza's release of the prisoners and a deluge of anti-war mail sent to the White House diverted Wilson from his warlike path; and, instead of the "war message" he had prepared to deliver to Congress, Wilson read a moving, conciliatory address.¹³

Because of the conditions along the border and the fact that the executive council of the A.F.L. was scheduled to meet in Washington, Gompers suggested that twenty Mexican delegates select two of their number to proceed to Washington as a sub-delegation to meet with the A.F.L. executive council for the purpose of establishing closer relations between the labor movements of the neighboring republics.¹⁴ Before departing for the American capital, a communication was signed by Morones, Edmundo Martínez, Carlos Loveira, and Salvador Gongález García, and sent in the name of Mexican organized workers to the A.F.L. urging it to use its influence to secure the withdrawal of the Pershing Expedition.¹⁵

Upon their arrival in Washington, Morones and Gongález García found two labor representatives of Governor Salvador Alvarado of Yucatan awaiting them as well. Thus, a reasonable semblance of a joint Mexican-American labor conference could be

¹³Arthur Link, Wilson, IV, 314-318 in Levenstein, "The United States Labor Movement and Mexico, 1910-1951," 55.

¹⁴Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, II, 313; Morones' speech in "La C.R.O.M. ni se muere ni se rinde," C.R.O.M., November, 1920, 13.

¹⁵Carleton Beals, Mexico: an Interpretation (New York, 1923), 137.

held. The violation of Mexican sovereignty by United States troops served as the catalyst which prompted Gompers to suggest meetings between the two labor movements.

According to cromistas (who ignore President Wilson's role), Morones entered into relations with Gompers and with the help of the American labor movement, Gompers and Morones were able to obtain withdrawal of the American soldiers.¹⁶ This reunion was also important because it was a forerunner of the Pan-American Federation of Labor.

Morones returned to Mexico after the joint meeting, and later that year Gompers wrote him and other leaders recommending that they follow the organizational scheme of the A.F.L. This would include organizing skilled and unskilled labor into trade unions, not industrial unions. Gompers was anxious to form a Pan-American federation of labor. Progress in this field was retarded, however, by World War I, and it was not until the war was over that the long-anticipated organizing convention occurred.

SOCIALIST WORKERS' PARTY

After the failure of the general strike in May, 1916, many leaders of the labor movement, including a number of S.M.E. members, were convinced that vigorous political action was the only way to assure labor that the fiasco of 1916 would not be

¹⁶José Petricioli, interview, Mexico City, June 25, 1968; Luis Enrique Morones Peña, interview, Mexico City, August 24, 1968; C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1963-1965, 27; Rogelio de la Selva in Las Novedades, April 7, 1964.

repeated. Thus they organized the Partido Socialista Obrero to advocate political activity as a supplement to economic actions by unions. The candidacy of Morones and eight other leaders for congressional seats was put forth on February 20, 1917, to compete against Carranza's Liberal Constitutional Party. All were defeated and the Socialist Workers' Party made few noteworthy gains in the election.¹⁷ Nevertheless, this cadre coalesced in 1918 and provided the leadership for what became Mexico's most powerful trade union. Furthermore, no Mexican union or political party has since really denied the P.S.O.'s principle of supplementing economic activity with political action.

ABORTIVE EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A NATION-WIDE LABOR ORGANIZATION

An attempt was made at Tampico to create a labor organization when unions of the Casa convoked a national assembly there in October, 1917. The delegation from the Federal District consisted of Morones, Reynaldo Cervantes Torres, Amado Ortíz, Rodolfo Aguirre, Gabriel Hidalgo, and Francisco Cervantes López.¹⁸

¹⁷Araiza, Historia del movimiento obrero mexicano, III, 36; Rosendo Salazar and José G. Escobedo, Las pugnas de la gleba (México, D.F., 1923), 236; Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 71.

¹⁸Cervantes Torres represented the Federación de Sindicatos Obreros del Distrito Federal y Sindicatos de Carpinteros y Costureras; Morones, the Sindicato de Electricistas; Amado Ortíz, the Sindicato de Sastres de México, D.F.; Aguirre and Hidalgo, the Federación de Obreros y Empleados de Tranvías de México, D.F.; and Cervantes López, the Partido Socialista Obrero de México, D.F. Salazar and Escobedo, Las pugnas de la gleba, 243-244.

During the conference labor leaders from different areas fought for control. The conference quickly split into two opposing groups. The trade unionists from the Federal District, headed by Morones, were opposed by the anarchists, mostly from Tampico, and led by Ricardo Treviño. Opponents of the Federal District delegates accused them of attending the congress to act as informants for the government which was subsidizing them. Some from the Federal District were arrested, but none of these were moronistas whom competitors alleged had the protection of the secret police.¹⁹ Because of such discord, a nation-wide labor organization did not materialize until the following year.

¹⁹Ricardo Treviño, El movimiento obrero en México. Su evolución ideológica (México, D.F., 1948), 48. Treviño is vague in his one brief paragraph describing this incident. He neither identifies the "opponents," the specific group arrested, nor who apprehended them. One assumes government agents seized them since Treviño mentions secret police. He does, however, praise Morones' cleverness for pretending to be a government instrument. In reality, according to Treviño, Morones outwitted the administration and used its generosity to finance his delegation.

CHAPTER III

CROM, P.A.F.L., AND P.L.M. FOUNDINGS

CROM FOUNDING

CROM was founded as a result of a split which took place among the laborers in Mexico, as some (the most radical, called "reds") believed that they should always go against the government, while others, (less radical, called the "yellows") thought that, on the contrary, to give greater protection to the workers they should enter into politics and endeavor to get as many legislative posts as they could.

In January, 1918, Licenciado Gustavo Espinosa Mireles, governor of Coahuila, called a convention to meet in Saltillo to form a nation-wide labor organization which President Carranza hoped to dominate.¹ Morones was one of the first to know the governor's intentions, because Juan Lozano, a member of the organizational committee, explained the situation to him. Since travelling expenses and lodging were paid by the Coahuila government, Morones received 150 pesos to journey to Saltillo from Mexico City; he unsuccessfully asked for more, alleging that this was a paltry sum for a leader of his caliber.²

¹Treviño, El movimiento obrero en México, 74; Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Teoría y práctica del movimiento sindical mexicano (México, D.F., 1961), 53-54.

²Carlos Tresguerras in La Prensa, May 31, 1939.

The congress which opened May 1 in Saltillo's Teatro Obrero included 121 representatives from all the Mexican states. In this meeting Morones' fiery orations and behind-the-scenes maneuvering pushed him rapidly to the front as the obvious leader of the new organization. Morones' national reputation was based largely on the Mexicans' believing that he had ended U.S. military presence in Mexico. This, added to the following he gained at the Veracruz and Tampico congresses, made Morones the most prominent man in the Mexican labor movement at Saltillo. Through sheer energy and a sense of political direction which other leaders lacked, Morones and Ezequiel Salcedo, leader of a small group from the Federal District, manipulated the convention and imposed their will upon the congress.

Fernando Rodarte, in the name of the assembly, declared the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana to be in existence, with the following selected as the provisional executive committee: Jacinto Huitrón, Secretary General; Luis N. Morones, Secretary of Interior; Teodoro Ramírez, Secretary of Exterior; and Ricardo Treviño, Secretary of Acuerdos.³ At the 8:00 P.M. session of May 11 the central committee was elected by the assembly for the

³C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1941-1943, xix; Atlas, June 15, 1968. Huitrón was an anarchist; Morones, a trade unionist; Ramírez, a syndicalist; and Treviño, an adherent of the Industrial Workers of the World. Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 61. The founders chose the word "Regional" because it conveyed the concept that the syndical organization of Mexico was a fraction of the international labor movement. Lombardo Toledano, Teoría y práctica, 54.

coming year. Morones was chosen secretary general by a vote of 85 to 6 and Treviño and J. Marcos Tristán corresponding secretaries.⁴

Morones demonstrated his intelligence by maneuvering the Saltillo convention in a form to his liking. Carranza intended that the new labor organization would give him unquestioned support; in fact, it turned out to be one of his strongest opponents.

CROM STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

CROM was a loose federation of autonomous national, state, and local unions organized much on the pattern of the American Federation of Labor. It was composed of trade, labor, and directly affiliated workers' syndicates. The sindicato, or syndicate (single unit), combined laborers either of similar occupations, like the United States trade unions, or of the same establishment, like the United States industrial unions. The terms unión, liga, and sociedad were also used, generally

⁴C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1941-1943, xxxviii-xl; John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico (Austin, 1961), 274. The committee was to have its headquarters at Aguascalientes, but in 1921 the central committee was permanently transferred to the Federal District, the center of the Mexican labor movement. According to Retinger, Morones was, "Born when the process of the invasion of Mexico by foreign capitalism was at its height, his life is the unique story of a boy who, from being an electrician's apprentice, became in less than ten years the greatest moral leader of his country, the founder of an important labour movement and the object of hero worship of multitudes of his fellow countrymen." Morones of Mexico, xv-xvi. That Morones was "the greatest moral leader of his country" is as questionable as is the statement "the object of hero worship of multitudes of his fellow countrymen." These panegyric remarks incorporate more propaganda than concrete fact.

indiscriminately, to designate these organizations. In addition to the state and federal federations, CROM in the 1920's included four national industrial federations: those of printing trades, port and harbor workers, railroad workers, and theater employees.

In a country filled with impoverished laborers, CROM was not confined to the industrial population. While industrial workers, such as miners, railwaymen, textile workers, electricians, and petroleum workers joined, CROM included non-industrial vocations also. Especially strong in Mexico City and among factory and farm workers, CROM organized a multiplicity of elements comprising, among others, gravediggers, bullfighters, domestic servants, fruit vendors, government employees, department-store workers, newsboys, and a union of Mexico City prostitutes.⁵ CROM even dominated the entertainment industry, shouting down theatrical performances in which non-unionized actors were employed; and, by controlling the printers, CROM was able to exercise unofficial censorship over the Mexican press.⁶

Despite its federative framework, CROM was centralized. The central committee, (composed of three general secretaries together with a variable number of secretaries for agriculture, transportation, treasury, and heads of the national federations), was the

⁵Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 108; Edward Alsworth Ross, The Social Revolution in Mexico (New York, 1923), 103; Parkes, A History of Mexico, 382.

⁶Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 119; Parkes, A History of Mexico, 382.

executive of the whole federation. It carried out agreements of the annual national conventions, enforced the confederation's constitution, and handled emergency situations of national importance.

GRUPO ACCION

Although elected delegates from each union acting in assemblies gave CROM a democratic appearance, internal politics were actually managed by a small inner clique called the Grupo Acción which dictated pre-convention policies. Before the formation of CROM, when the Casa was leading the Mexican labor movement, a number of young men met frequently in Mexico City to plan and direct union activity. From these meetings Morones got the idea of the Grupo Acción which he formed in 1918. The purpose of this cadre was to study important problems, prepare plans, and present a united front to the labor organization. Although this body was unmentioned in the CROM constitution, it became the policy-making and chief governing body conducting day-to-day affairs.⁷

The hierarchical structure of CROM and the fact that a cadre which met in secret, perpetuated itself in office, and exercised an influence out of proportion to its size, ensured that no reform

⁷At first the Grupo Acción consisted of eighteen members, two-thirds of whom were from the Federal District and all of whom had played an active part in Mexico's incipient organized labor movement. Original members included Morones, Salcedo, Celestino Gasca, Juan Rico, Ricardo Treviño, J. Marcos Tristán, Eduardo Moneda, Juan B. Fonseca, Fernando Rodarte, Juan Lozano, José López Cortés, Reynaldo Cervantes Torres, Adalberto Polo, Pedro Suárez, Pedro Rivera Flores, Salvador Álvarez, Samuel Yúdico, and José Gutiérrez. From time to time new members would be added, but at no time were there more than twenty in the select group.

could be made except from the top downwards. Morones was the acknowledged leader and most authoritative member of the Grupo, in spite of the fact that forty years later he attempted to underplay his commanding position when he stated, "I, like any other member of the Grupo Acción, was subject to the determination of the majority."⁸ Although Grupo members were not figureheads, they were subordinate to Morones; he was the dominant figure and more than anyone else shaped policy.

CROM IDEOLOGY

With CROM's foundation, an elite of the organized working class began to formulate, clarify, and build its program. In its early years CROM was militant, because its ranks contained many elements that had formed the Casa. Nevertheless, it adopted a platform less radical and less influenced by Russian thought than that of the Casa. Although CROM utilized the anarcho-syndicalist "salud y revolución" as its official motto, adopted the Casa's organizational flag, (a red banner crossed by a black stripe) and freely used anarchist jargon, it abandoned syndicalism and generally followed the United States labor movement.

Through ideological eclecticism, CROM combined elements of diverse systems to form a new unit. The constitution abandoned the anarcho-syndicalist doctrine and accepted the theory of class conflict, the breaking up of large estates and land distribution,

⁸ Luis N. Morones in Petricioli, El compañero Morones, 14.

ownership of industry by workers, and the reform of the conciliation and arbitration labor boards.⁹ Although advocating ultimate ownership and management of industry by the workers, CROM leadership stressed immediate economic and social improvements such as agrarian reform and enforcement of the newly-adopted labor laws of the 1917 Mexican Constitution. Broadly stated, two goals of CROM were (1) the legitimate defense and execution of the workers' interests guaranteed under the Mexican Constitution, and (2) the solution of economic problems that confronted the country.¹⁰ In achieving its goals CROM used both economic and political means. It replaced anarchism's direct action with multiple action. This meant combining the use of strikes to extract better working conditions from the employers with direct political action; and, thus in the manner of British unions, it would change the socio-economic system.¹¹

P.A.F.L. FOUNDING

John Murray, correspondent for the New York Call, and Santiago Iglesias, Puerto Rican organizer for the A.F.L. and a man who was familiar with Mexican affairs, became convinced of the necessity

⁹Beals, Mexico: an Interpretation, 136; Joe C. Ashby, Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas (Chapel Hill, 1963), 14; William P. Tucker, The Mexican Government Today (Minneapolis, 1957), 54. Morones had earlier observed trade unions in France, Germany, England, and the United States and decided to adapt these principles to the Mexican environment and conditions.

¹⁰Luis N. Morones in El Universal, August 27, 1954; Ashby, Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas, 14.

¹¹Lombardo Toledano, Teoría y práctica, 55.



Courtesy El Excelsior

CROM BANQUET. LUIS N. MORONES AND GUESTS

for a formal Pan-American labor organization. These two men aided by various other factors helped convince President of the A.F.L. Samuel Gompers that the A.F.L. should enter into some kind of a formal alliance with CROM. There was, for example, a strong current of opinion in Mexico favorable to Germany during World War I. A Pan-American federation, as Gompers saw it, could counteract Germanophile tendencies and create favorable opinion for the Allied cause. With this in mind, Gompers continued to urge Mexican labor leaders to push for the joint meeting. Gompers' hopes were fulfilled by events of autumn, 1918.

The Pan-American Federation of Labor, which the CROM joined for opportunist reasons, was founded in November, 1918, in Laredo, Texas. November 13, the first day of the conference, was devoted to welcoming the deputies, speech-making, and ceremonial activities. W. B. Wilson, United States Secretary of Labor, attended the conference as President Woodrow Wilson's emissary, and General Pablo de la Garza represented and spoke in behalf of President Carranza. Following addresses by Wilson and Ricardo de León, the Guatemalan delegate, Morones spoke emphasizing the fact that Mexican delegates came to the conference not as subordinates to A.F.L. members but as their equals. He said:

Let it not be supposed that, lacking respect, we have crossed the boundary line which divides the two countries to render vassalage to a powerful labor organization. No, that is not our mission. With due regard to the American Federation of Labor, we have come to deal with it as one organization deals with another

organization, and discuss the far-reaching
problems that directly affect the workers
of Mexico and the workers of the United States.¹²

Morones terminated his speech by appealing for Pan-American-working-class solidarity which brought prolonged applause from the audience.

Following Gompers' address, the meeting adjourned until that afternoon. The conference reconvened in Laredo's Latin-American Club, where the remainder of its sessions were held. Morones had several important demands: (1) the appointment by the A.F.L. and CROM of resident representatives in the border cities who would try to secure proper treatment of Mexican immigrants, (2) the extension to Mexicans of facilities for joining American unions with full privileges, (3) agreement to secure justice for workers imprisoned in the United States, and, (4) the exclusion from the conference of questions bearing on Mexican neutrality in World War I, and on the internal policies of either country. The first two points were referred to the A.F.L. executive council for investigation and action.

Point 3 developed into a debate between Gompers and Morones over the Industrial Workers of the World. Their disagreement was occasioned by CROM's demand that the A.F.L. exert influence to secure justice and protection for I.W.W. members imprisoned in the United States. Gompers, impatient and angry, answered that they were not incarcerated for their socialist theories, but for criminal

¹²Pan American Labor Press, December 4, 1918, in Sinclair Snow, "Samuel Gompers and the Pan-American Federation" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1960), 80.

reasons; that is, they were "American Bolsheviks" and had sought to hinder the progress of the Great War by their propaganda activities against the recruitment of soldiers. Gompers assumed a hard line and warned against I.W.W. activities in Mexico. Disputing this view, Morones asserted that the A.F.L. should allow the I.W.W. to disseminate propaganda without any interference. Gompers called Morones' bluff, and the Mexican was quick to capitulate by delivering a conciliatory speech. Later, he remarked to Gompers that the discussion on the I.W.W. issue had been staged to satisfy "the people back home" who had heard that the A.F.L. had encouraged the jailing of these American workers.

Despite point 4, Gompers introduced a resolution endorsing the Treaty of Versailles, League of Nations, and the International Labor Organization. John Alpine, a member of the A.F.L. executive council, moved that the resolution be adopted. Morones, however, instantly objected to its consideration because it was extraneous to the convention's objects. Realizing that Mexicans would interpret discussion of peace terms as a violation of Mexican neutrality, Morones demurred, and the ensuing dispute was more heated than the one concerning the I.W.W. Citing the fact that these proposals had already been adopted by the labor movements of the United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries assembled at the recent Interallied Labor Conference in London, Gompers insisted that this resolution definitely treated labor's concern. Reynaldo Cervantes Torres of the Grupo Acción supported Morones' contention that, while they as individuals

understood and approved the resolution, they were unauthorized to discuss political problems. Gompers then challenged the Mexican delegation to go on record as opposing the peace terms, but following a strenuous objection, Morones declared that the Mexican delegates would each sign the resolution, but only in a personal, and not an official, capacity. Finally, Morones and his adherents supported the controversial resolution "subject to ratification by their Mexican co-workers."¹³ Morones had been confronted by a dilemma since he did not want to vote for any measure pertaining to United States foreign policy. Voting for some parts of the resolution and against others would have probably been the worst thing he could have done, because it would have exposed him to attacks from all sides. Morones and Cervantes Torres knew that their action would be rejected by other cromistas; nevertheless, they signed the resolution in order to maintain harmonious relations with Gompers.

Shortly before the conference closed, it discussed the exchange of union cards. A Mexican delegate from the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers' Union directed three questions to the chairman of the Resolutions Committee: "Will the American unions agree to admit Mexican workers into their ranks? Will Mexican members have the same rights and privileges as American members? Will the antagonism of races continue within (labor) organizations?"¹⁴ William Green answered the first question by stating that each component union of

¹³Ibid., 86-87.

¹⁴Ibid., 89.

the A.F.L. had its own regulations covering admission. Since an agreement on the exchange of union cards had been one of the major reasons the Mexican trade unionists had supported the idea of a federation of Pan-American labor, Morones was dissatisfied with Green's reply. Gompers ended the discussion by emphasizing that the A.F.L. had no authority to compel its unions to exchange cards.

The election of officers of the new Pan-American Federation of Labor was accomplished without difficulty. Gompers was chosen president; John Murray, English-Language secretary; and Canuto Vargas, a Mexican member of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers' Union of Arizona, Spanish-Language secretary.

Disagreement arose over the site of the first congress, but the conference finally decided to hold it in Panama, beginning in July, 1919. After some Mexican representatives objected to Panama, this problem was reconsidered at a joint meeting of Mexican delegates and the A.F.L. executive council, held in San Antonio, Texas, a few days after the Laredo conference had adjourned. Morones suggested that the meeting be held in Havana, but when James Duncan of the A.F.L. executive council suggested that New York City was more convenient because it was a center of information and publicity, New York was unanimously selected.

P.L.M. FOUNDING

Although CROM's development was influenced through the proximity and frequent intercourse with the A.F.L., in one very noticeable aspect it was the antithesis of the A.F.L.; it utilized

direct political party intervention. The Grupo Acción was convinced that if a trade unionist movement were to succeed, it must do so by political, as well as by union, organization. Realizing that as long as the government remained free from labor control it was useless to expect the creation of a new social order, Morones employed political power by founding the Partido Laborista Mexicano or Mexican Labor Party.

Following Eduardo Moneda's invitation, more than seventy cromistas met in Mexico City on December 21, 1919, to found the P.L.M. Following Morones' and Gasca's speeches about the need of worker participation in politics to hasten desired revolutionary achievements, the founders decided that the party should consist entirely of workers and exclude professional politicians.

Morones claimed that the P.L.M. was founded to create a force of socio-political character and place it at the service of CROM to make the CROM program viable.¹⁵ According to him, the P.L.M.'s only program was that of CROM; it was to be the "loudspeaker" of the CROM's social platform.¹⁶

Nominally an entity separate from the CROM, the P.L.M. actually was its political wing. Morones' transformation of direct action into multiple action necessitated participation in politics as a means and not as an end. The P.L.M. planned to "carry class war

¹⁵"Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Luis N. Morones en la velada por el Partido Laborista Mexicano la noche del 21 de diciembre de 1931, para conmemorar el XII aniversario de su fundación." C.R.O.M., January 1, 1932, 31.

¹⁶"Discurso por el c. Luis N. Morones en el mitin que tuvo lugar en el Teatro Hidalgo, la noche del 8 de enero de 1938." C.R.O.M., February, 1938, 7.

into the field of politics," and at the same time to put the Grupo Acción in line for political jobs.¹⁷ At the height of CROM's power, Ricardo Treviño, secretary general, explained that CROM was itself no more in politics than was the A.F.L., but "Mexican wage earners function politically through the Labor Party, organized specifically to keep the unions as unions out of the political arena."¹⁸ Leaders of CROM became leaders of the P.L.M.; and these leaders subordinated P.L.M. to CROM, whose instructions it executed. Treviño's assertion, therefore, is misleading. Morones' critics charged that he founded the Partido Laborista to serve instead as the "Partido Moronista," and in lieu of serving the masses it served as a stairway for his ambition.¹⁹

A chief reason for forming the Labor Party was to support Alvaro Obregón's candidacy for the Mexican presidency against that of Carranza's protégé, Ignacio Bonillas. Cromistas held their first annual convention of the P.L.M. in Zacatecas, where the governor, General Enrique Estrada, was an obregonista. Among the forty-four delegates who met at Calderón Theater in Ciudad Zacatecas March 1-9, 1920, to endorse Obregón were Morones, who was elected secretary general of the party, General Francisco Serrano, Licenciado Emilio

¹⁷Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 70; José O. Petricioli, et al., Estudios proletarios (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F., 1959), I, 182, describes P.L.M. as "a political class party."

¹⁸Chester Wright, "Mexico's Peaceful Revolution under Calles," Current History, XXIV (July, 1926), 506.

¹⁹Miguel Gil in La Prensa, January 26, 28, 1938.

Portes Gil, and Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Yucatan's reformist governor.²⁰

The union's support of Obregón was promised after the future president and CROM leaders formed a secret pact on August 6, 1919.

The following are some of provisions of that clandestine agreement:

1. A ministry of labor should be created, and placed in charge of a person closely identified with labor interests.
2. Until the creation of such a special ministry, the existing Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Labor should be in charge of a person closely identified with labor.
3. The Ministry of Agriculture should be entrusted to a person well qualified for the position, and recommendations of the labor groups in matters of agriculture should receive attention.
4. In appointing the persons mentioned in clauses 1, 2 and 3, the recommendations of the labor party that was to be created should be taken into consideration.
5. As soon as a labor law could be approved, it should be promulgated and put into immediate effect.
6. The Central Committee of the Mexican Federation of Labor should be granted legal personality, so that it might deal directly with the Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labor, and with the President.
7. On at least one day each week the Central Committee should be given opportunity to consult with the President on labor problems.

²⁰ Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 275; Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 71; Moisés Poblete Troncoso, El movimiento obrero latino-americano (Mexico, D.F., 1946), 223; José Petricioli in El Excelsior, April 6, 1964; Miguel Gil in La Prensa, January 26, 1938. It would have been necessary for Carranza to have chosen a candidate of eminent qualities with a long record of distinguished service, a man of immense popularity. He did just the opposite and selected the little-known ambassador to Washington, Ignacio Bonillas, a man who had spent most of his life away from his native land.

8. Every facility should be given the Mexican Federation of Labor to aid it in putting its plans and resolutions into effect.

9. The opinion of the labor organizations of the country should be given consideration in any reforms or changes of general interest in the country.

10. Facilities for propaganda and labor organization throughout the country should be given the Mexican Federation of Labor and the Labor Party.²¹

This arrangement, which was made public on August 21, 1930, was signed by Morones and ten members of the Grupo Acción.

In the political sphere Morones proved to be just as astute as he was in the union organizing arena. By doing what was politically expedient, Obregón secured the support of Morones' CROM, at that time the predominant Mexican labor organization. Morones, with political foresight, allied with Obregón during Carranza's administration. He thus joined the future of the organized labor movement with the possible incoming government in order to strengthen the workers' movement. This alliance proved most profitable for Morones' when Obregón became president of Mexico.

²¹Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 72-73.

CHAPTER IV

MORONES AND CROM DURING OBREGON'S PRESIDENCY, 1920-24

Relations between President Carranza and CROM had always been at best tenuous, so when he showed signs of planning to perpetuate himself in office, Morones allied with Obregón. The general, partly because of Morones' aid, escaped from Mexico City and led the rebellion that overthrew Carranza. Morones and various cromistas were rewarded with political patronage, money, and special privileges, and Morones continued his rise to the apogee of his power.

PLAN OF AGUA PRIETA

Carranza's agents harassed Obregón as he directed his presidential campaign from Mexico City. One day he received word that Carranza planned to jail him on charges of conspiracy and treason. Morones, having heard these rumors, urged Obregón to flee the capital. Obregón departed from the home of Miguel Alessio Robles on the evening of April 11, 1920. Obregón, Licenciado Rafael Zubarán, and Alessio Robles sat in the back seat of the automobile; Morones and the driver sat in the front. Noting that their car was being followed by government motorcyclists, the presidential candidate exchanged his prominent straw hat for Zubarán's hat. When their vehicle reached the Plaza de Orizaba, Obregón leaped from the slow-moving car and hid among the trees. He then entered a Ford which had been placed in readiness by two friends. Obregón's swift departure had been unnoticed by the police because of the straw hat change.

When the others arrived at the Café Colón on the Paseo de la Reforma to drink cognac, they were interrupted by the officers seeking Obregón. After the police departed, Morones, Zubarán, and Alessio left the restaurant, each going in a different direction to confuse the carrancistas.¹

Before leaving his companions, Obregón gave Morones a 500 peso check which he was to cash at Comisión Monetaria. Morones was to use the money to purchase Obregón some medicine for his respiratory ailment. Obregón told Morones that he could use the remainder for his family. Morones was warned that he might have difficulty cashing the check and was informed to meet Obregón in Margarito Ramírez's home which he did.²

Having been told by Obregón to join him somewhere between Mexico City and Chilpancingo, Morones went to Iguala on April 13. Not finding Obregón there, he journeyed to Mexcala where he succeeded in linking up with the general. They continued southward to Chilpancingo, where various pronouncements were issued on April 20. In their manifesto to Labor Party members, Morones, Álvarez, and Treviño stated that the Party's Directive Committee would work to further Obregón's cause. All working class members were advised to do likewise.³

¹Luis N. Morones to J.W.F. Dulles, February 16, 1957, photocopy, L.S.U. Archives.

²Ibid.

³Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 32.

The Sonora rebellion against Carranza began April 11, the same day that Obregón had fled the capital. Carranza dispatched troops to Sonora where the governor, Adolfo de la Huerta, considering this action an attack on his sovereignty, pronounced against the president. By the fifteenth, General Enrique Estrada, governor of Zacatecas, and General Pascual Ortiz Rubio, governor of Michoacán, endorsed the revolt.

Morones sailed from Acapulco north to Sonora but activities which he had planned, such as conferences at Cananea, were curtailed by de la Huerta. While Morones was in Sonora, opponents defying Carranza's efforts to control their state issued the Plan of Agua Prieta on April 23, 1920. This plan was largely the work of de la Huerta and generals Plutarco Calles and Salvador Alvarado.⁴

On May 7 Carranza and his entourage fled Mexico City and on May 9 Obregón entered the capital. Two days later Obregón's forces routed the carrancistas at San Marcos. The "First Chief" fled to

⁴Ibid., 33. According to Ariel Ramos, Morones left Sonora and "participated in the Plan of Agua Prieta" with Yúdice, Gracidas, Juan Rico, Rafael Quintero, Moneda, and Celestino Gasca. El Universal, April 6, 1964. Unfortunately, Ramos fails to specify Morones' exact role in the insurrection. Cline in The United States and Mexico writes that "Obregón was assisted in his displacement of the 'First Chief' by a great many people, the most notable of whom were Luis G. (sic) Morones, a labor leader of the Core, and northern henchmen of Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles and Adolfo de la Huerta," 193. In forming this evaluation, Cline had no access to any classified information and used only published material. Cline to Buford, November 6, 1970. L. Vincent Padgett also states that "When Carranza attempted to name Ignacio Bonillas his successor, Obregón, Calles, Morones, and Adolfo de la Huerta rebelled and brought him down." The Mexican Political System (Boston, 1966), 25.

the hills where he was assassinated May 21 in San Antonio Tlaxcalantongo, Veracruz. Dr. Carlos Sánchez Pérez, who performed an autopsy the following day, revealed that the victim had five wounds inflicted by firearms.⁵

Obregón, elected president in July, 1920, assumed office in December of that year. The newly-elected president, full of quips and yarns, jokingly described his "itchy palm" to Blasco Ibañez, the noted Spanish novelist whom the government had invited to Mexico. "I have only one hand," Obregón said, "while the others have two. That's why people prefer me. I can't steal so much or so fast."⁶ Typical of campaign promises in all countries, many of Obregón's were never fulfilled. Although Obregón displayed more willingness than his predecessor to enforce the labor provisions of the Mexican Constitution, no general labor law was enacted during his presidency.

UNOFFICIAL ENVOY TO WASHINGTON

Shortly after taking power Obregón sent Morones to Washington as his special representative to deliver an oral message to President Wilson. Morones went first to Gompers, who arranged interviews for

⁵Francisco L. Urquiza, Carranza: el hombre, el político, el caudillo, el patriota (6a ed.; Mexico, D.F., n.d.), 71.

⁶Blasco Ibañez, Mexico in Revolution, 60. Obregón was referring to his left hand, his right arm having been amputated as a result of a wound sustained at the Battle of Celaya, his significant victory over Pancho Villa in 1915.

him with Wilson and Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby.⁷ It appears that Morones' task was to assure Wilson that Obregón did not intend to harm American financial interests in Mexico; Obregón's pride and nationalism prevented him from putting this in writing before the United States granted recognition. In addition, Morones brought a letter from Obregón to Gompers in which Obregón asked the American labor leader to lend Morones any possible assistance in this important mission. The fact that Morones was one of the first men dispatched by the new Mexican government to smooth things over in the capital of the United States shows that Obregón was aware of the role which CROM could play in Mexican-American diplomatic relations and partly explains the privileged position which Morones' CROM achieved.

CROM PATRONAGE

CROM had supported a winner and the winner began to support it with various concessions. Although Morones wanted a ministry which the newly-elected president did not give him, he was named superintendent of the Departamento de Establecimientos Fabriles y Militares (Department of Military and Manufacturing Establishments) and of the army purchasing department. This office, created in 1917 to manufacture

⁷Memo by R. Lee Guard, May 24-25, 1920, Gompers Papers, in Levenstein, "The United States Labor Movement and Mexico, 1910-1951," 136. According to El Excelsior, "Informally and in his character as socialist workers' leader,...Morones, has in fact, gone to the United States to confer with workmen's organizations in that country, including the American Federation of Labor, in order to urge American labor to exercise its collective influence upon the Government of President Harding, to the end that diplomatic relations with Mexico might be resumed." March 13, 1920.

and repair war materials, was abolished by the decree of December 29, 1934, which made it a dependency of the Secretary of War and Navy on January 1, 1935.⁸ It had been an important bureau ranking just below a cabinet position. The Department of Military and Manufacturing Establishments consisted of eighteen factories which produced uniforms, saddlery, rifles, ammunition, and repaired larger military pieces obtained from abroad. With a combined budget of 30,000,000 pesos its head had one of the most lucrative posts in the government.⁹

Charges of maladministration and malfeasance were soon levelled against Morones. In 1921, Vito Alessio Robles, director of El Demócrata, accused Morones of having stolen at least 700,000 pesos from the Military Factories.¹⁰ In August, 1924, General José María Sánchez denounced Morones in the Senate for "exploiting" the Department to help support the Labor Party. For this purpose he had used deductions from salaries of employees of the Military Establishments and Mexico City municipal employees in 1922 and 1923. When the issue was revived in 1936, thirteen years after his resignation, Morones, in an attempt to vindicate himself of charges of graft while serving in this office, cited a letter dated in the early 1920's in which Plutarco Calles, Minister of Gobernación, stated his satisfaction with the efficiency with which Morones had discharged his duties. Morones contended that Calles praised him for

⁸Diario Oficial, LXXXVII, December 31, 1934.

⁹Beals, Glass Houses, 70-71.

¹⁰Vito Alessio Robles, Desfile sangriento (México, D.F., 1936), 70.

his "unquestionable honesty, zeal, and energy"; this, Morones claimed, endorsed his conduct as a public functionary.¹¹ Morones had been charged with graft during his tenure as director of the telephone company, and similar accusations recurred as long as he held this position. Criticism of his concessionary view of public office and of his dishonesty became commonplace during his later term as Secretary of Industry, Commerce, and Labor.

During Obregón's administration other CROM chieftains were also rewarded with political patronage: Celestino Gasca, the labor leader who had commanded workers' battalions, became Governor of the Federal District,¹² and through his patronage many positions were filled with cromistas. Two of Obregón's other appointments were Ezequiel Salcedo, head of the Graphic Shops, and Eduardo Moneda, Director of the newly-created Department of Social Prevision.

¹¹Luis N. Morones in El Universal, August 23, 1936; Luis N. Morones in El Universal, August 24, 1936. CROM also propagandized that Morones organized and converted the Military Establishments into "a dignified model." "El festival en honor del compañero Luis N. Morones," C.R.O.M., 1926, 36. Miguel Gil, on the other hand, alleges Morones divided his time between "Fabriles y las parrandas" (factories and sprees), La Prensa, January 26, 1938. Gil, one of Morones' most vocal critics, asserts that Morones wanted to be a powerful labor leader and was unconcerned about the methods he used to fulfill his limitless ambition. Morones, disappointed about his not being named to a ministry, accepted the Military Factories post to acquire more prestige in political spheres. La Prensa, February 21, 1938.

¹²Obregón had more confidence in Gasca than in Morones. Miguel Gil in La Prensa, January 26, 1938.

COUNTERBALANCE TO CROM

Although CROM chiefs were rewarded with political patronage, money, and special privileges, Obregón was too clever to allow the concentration of excessive power in the hands of the ambitious Morones. The president encouraged CROM, but attempted to counterbalance its power by allowing campesinos to organize in the Confederación Nacional Campesina (C.N.C.) under Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, an intellectual lawyer from San Luis Potosí. Soto y Gama, who had been Emiliano Zapata's advisor and orator, was now an obregonista. Since the peasants outnumbered the industrial workers, Obregón pinned his hopes largely on the agrarian movement. Facing the obstacles of isolation, illiteracy, and Indianism, the campesinos were difficult to mobilize and by far the most successful early mobilization turned out to be that undertaken by the cromistas.

Leaders of the Labor Party and the Agrarian Party became bitter enemies and frequent clashes occurred between the two factions in the Chamber of Deputies. Soto y Gama, for example, openly attacked Morones for implanting gomperismo with its "bastard" cooperation between labor and capital in Mexico, "...C.R.O.M. is sacred because it is a MAFIA of ex-workers converted into bureaucrats."¹³ Morones openly broke with Obregón's agrarian supporters, Soto y Gama and the bearded Aurelio Manrique in 1923.

¹³Diario de los debates de la Cámara de Diputados, September 30, 1925, 13, 19.

Although CROM was repaid with political favors and aid in crushing rival unions, Morones was not as strong under Obregón as he would be under the next president, Plutarco Calles. Hubert Herring overestimated Morones' power during Obregón's administration when he wrote:

Morones, buttressed by the CROM's inner council (Grupo Acción) and defended by his private guards, exercised a power second only to that of the president. Armed with Article 123 of the Constitution and supported by Obregón's courts and police, Morones' CROM exercised the power of life or death over every factory, mill, and shop.¹⁴

Under Calles' presidency, when Morones was at the apogee of his influence, he did not have much success in enforcing Article 123.

¹⁴Hubert Herring, A History of Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present (3rd ed.; New York, 1968), 349. Among other things Article 123 declares an eight-hour day; a seven-hour night; one day's rest in seven, equal pay for equal work; legal strikes; legal lock-outs; no labor for children under twelve; double wage rates for overtime and limitation on hours of overtime; wages to be paid in currency; employer liability for accidents and occupational diseases; maximum wages; profit sharing; and vacations with full pay for pregnant women in industry, both before and after the birth of the child. One interesting incident illustrating Morones' power was the one-man El Universal strike of 1922. Félix Palavicini, founder of this metropolitan daily in 1916, had signed individual contracts with all its workers. One man, Moreno Irrazabal, through an oversight had no contract. He presented himself to Palavicini, saying he represented an organization affiliated with CROM and demanded recognition for it. It was explained to him that the rest of the newspaper's staff was satisfied with their conditions of employment, and that there was no reason why a special and different contract should be made in this case. He insisted, however, and was asked to leave. On the night of September 7, 1922, a group of armed men, cromistas from the military factories then under Morones' direction, invaded the plant, placed the CROM red and black banner in the doorway, and stationed workers and police on guard. At the end of a week, Morones permitted Palavicini to reopen after agreeing to pay the wages of all his men during that week. Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage, 355-357.

The extent of enforcement depended upon the strength of the local labor organizations, and in each state the extent of organization depended on whether or not the local governor was favorable to the trade-union movement and its leaders. The geographical remoteness of the state and local governments from the central authorities meant that these units could formulate interim policy. In addition, Morones could not intimidate strong governors who exerted independence and vitality. To opine that Morones "exercised his power of life or death over every factory, mill, and shop," is to overstate his authority.

CROM GROWTH

CROM experienced a tremendous growth, one without precedence and equal in the history of Mexican organized labor. Without precise data concerning the rank and file cromistas who were inarticulate, it is impossible to determine accurately the confederation's membership totals. Limits that defined formal membership were nebulous. No sharp barriers separated dues-paying members from non-dues-paying members. Large numbers of campesinos' names remained on the rolls without their paying union dues, and the central committee kept no exact count of individual membership. Data often conflict, are deliberately overestimated, inaccurate, and untrustworthy. Sources state numbers, obviously wild guesses, rather than calculated estimates. Furthermore, exaggerations of membership claims and strength reached an all-time high in the

1920's.¹⁵ From its founding, in 1918 to 1924, Obregón's last year as president, CROM claimed the following, obviously overestimated, figures as its membership: 1918, 7,000; 1919, 10,000; 1920, 50,000; 1921, 150,000; 1922, 400,000; 1923, 800,000; and 1924, 1,200,000.¹⁶

P.L.M. PLATFORM

At its first annual convention in 1920, the P.L.M. adopted a platform which articulated its interests. The party pledged itself to support CROM and to carry out that organization's program in the political field. The party advocated the subdivision of large estates among laborers as a basic welfare measure for farm workers and society in general. The platform also called for effective

¹⁵For a brief discussion of the complications involved in ascertaining exact membership figures in Mexican trade unions, see Horace B. Davis, "Numerical Strength of Mexican Unions," South-western Social Science Quarterly, XXXV (June, 1954), 48-55. According to Davis there are several reasons why unions habitually overstate their membership. First, many unions pay no benefits and collect dues irregularly or not at all, so that there is an unsatisfactory definition of what constitutes a union member. Second, the strongly political nature of the organized labor movement makes it appear to the union desirable that it should claim a large membership for the sake of the influence that a large membership brings. Third, dual unionism is a serious problem in the Mexican labor movement, and a union is reluctant to admit that it has less members than its rivals. Fourth, bookkeeping is so casual that officials do not know themselves the extent of membership.

¹⁶C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1924-1926, 19-20; Poblete, El movimiento obrero latinoamericano, 226; Edward Ross, citing no source, gives the 1920 figure as 400,000 and that of 1922 as 650,000, The Social Revolution in Mexico, 103. The American Labor Year Book gives the 1922 total as 500,000 and cites 600,000 for 1923. Arthur P. Whitaker gives the 1924 membership as "over 1 million." Arthur P. Whitaker and David G. Jordan, Nationalism in Contemporary Latin America (New York, 1966), 42.

enforcement of labor laws, the establishment of experimental granges, irrigation projects, and mechanical and vocational schools; dissemination of primary education especially among adults, men and women alike; autonomy for state and municipal government; and regulation of the manufacture, sale and use of alcoholic beverages in order to curb drunkenness.¹⁷ Leaders of P.L.M. sought to picture it as the true advocate of social change in Mexico and as the only valid defender of the organized working class and marginal workers.

C.G.T.

One year after founding its political party, P.L.M., CROM; now two years old, underwent a major change. The Morones faction continued to control CROM, but not without a major struggle. Complete harmony within any interest group is a fiction. Large or small, organizations experience altercations over policies involving both means and ends. These disputes, which CROM also experienced, both produced and reflected struggles for leadership. Within CROM, a splinter movement sprang up. The ultra-radical elements which were in considerable force at the first CROM convention and were still recalcitrant at the second convention held in Aguascalientes in July, 1920, left CROM after the communists, socialists, and radical agrarians led by Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama clashed with the rightists headed by Morones.¹⁸ Soto y Gama

¹⁷"The Mexican Labor Party," Survey, XLIV (May 8, 1920), 202-203. The P.L.M. also half-heartedly attempted to incorporate Indians into the nation by granting them land and education.

¹⁸Poblete Troncoso, El movimiento obrero latinoamericano, 224; Ashby, Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lazaro Cárdenas, 13; Beals, Mexico: an Interpretation, 140; Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 67.

attempted to wrest control from Morones and emphasized agrarian rather urban problems in CROM. Defeated in his abortive attempt to unseat Morones, Soto y Gama withdrew to found a rival organization.

This seceding group plus other organizers not admitted to or expelled from CROM, convened a number of workmen in Mexico City on February 15, 1921 to form the Confederación General de Trabajadores. The C.G.T. claimed loyalty to anarcho-syndicalist and non-political ideas that had originally animated many CROM leaders. Rosendo Salazar, José Escobedo, and Luis Araiza led this movement against politicalism and favored a returning to the direct action policy of 1921. The C.G.T., which became strongest in the textile factories in and near the Federal District, never grew much beyond its original strength and its importance was that it enabled CROM to clarify its goals and adopt a more conservative outlook.¹⁹

In January, 1923, the streetcar workers struck. Obregón, declaring that the government had to protect society, advised immediate arbitration. Morones knew this was the propitious moment to destroy the C.G.T. because the majority of the tranviarios (streetcar conductors) belonged to that organization. Instead of complying with Obregón's wishes, the strikers went instead to their

¹⁹CROM emerged from the turmoil of 1919-21 stronger economically and politically plus opposed to the communists and syndicalists. Lewis L. Lorwin, The International Labor Movement: History, Policies, Outlook (New York, 1953), 293-294.

headquarters and held a tumultuous meeting. Some of Morones' scabs drove a streetcar with troops of the Sixteenth Battalion to the C.G.T. offices. Results of the attack were 4 dead (3 tranviarios and 1 soldier); 3 wounded soldiers and 5 wounded workers, and over 100 C.G.T. members arrested and sent to prison.²⁰

CROM RELATIONS WITH THE A.F.T.U.

CROM followed the example of the A.F.L. in refraining from opening official relationships with European labor movements; however, Morones kept CROM's position from being one of steadfast aloofness.²¹ He went to Europe and participated in the Hague Congress which the Amsterdam Federation of Trade Unions convened in 1922 to protest militarism and war and suggested that the Amsterdam executive bureau send leaders of the European labor movement as CROM's guests to study Mexican conditions. The invitation was accepted and a date fixed for the committee's departure, but it was twice postponed and the mission was finally abandoned. CROM probably would have joined the Amsterdam International had the A.F.L. favored such a policy. To prove CROM-A.F.L.

²⁰La Prensa, February 21, 1938; Alessio Robles, Desfile sangriento, 15-23; Records of Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929. Washington, 1959. Microfilm, 243 rolls. Summerlin to Secretary of State, February 2, 1923, 812.504/451. Hereinafter cited as "Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929."

²¹"Morones has always been a champion of close contact...with all workers' organizations, national or international, irrespective of their individual policies as long as they genuinely represent the labour elements of their respective countries and work within the general principles of labour organization." Retinger, Morones of Mexico, 35.

solidarity, leaders of both organizations met in the fall of 1923 in El Paso to announce the "Monroe Doctrine of Labor," a joint declaration of hostility to any efforts on the part of European labor in the Western Hemisphere.²²

THE DE LA HUERTA REBELLION

On December 6, 1923, Adolfo de la Huerta began his rebellion to topple Obregón. De la Huerta wanted to be president, but because of the "no re-election principle" was ineligible since he had served as provisional president after Carranza's death. Two days after the revolt started, CROM secretary general Ricardo Treviño appealed to Gompers for aid, requesting that Gompers use his influence as head of the A.F.L. and P.A.F.L. to prevent assistance from reaching de la Huerta from his followers in the United States. Morones made a similar appeal and immediately sent Robert Haberman to the United States as his personal agent and general representative of the Mexican government. After conferring with Haberman, Gompers wrote Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes that he had been "reliably informed" that de la Huerta was receiving arms illegally from the United States and that Hughes should enforce the law against transporting weapons to Mexico. Gompers suggested in his communication that such action violated the wishes of the United States government. He

²²Bernard Mandel, Samuel Gompers: a Biography (Yellow Springs, 1963), 462.

intimated that the Secretary of State should support Obregón when he said: "I take it that all citizens of our country will wish not only to observe International law in this case but will hope for the triumph in Mexico of government based upon law and upon the free suffrage of the people."²³

Although the December uprising was primarily military, important civilian elements participated. A large element of labor had become disenchanted with the government, particularly of Morones and Gasca.²⁴ Morones' CROM, one of many pro-Obregón organs, supported him with propaganda, political activities, and armed battalions formed of workers serving in the field with Obregón's regular troops. Morones influenced policy during Obregón's administration when he personally persuaded his close friend, Samuel Gompers, to issue an official statement asking American unions engaged in transportation at border ports to assist in the detection of gun-running and smuggling of illegal supplies destined for de la Huerta forces. This boycott added to the effectiveness of the embargo already established at the Mexican border by President Calvin Coolidge, and aided Obregón

²³Report of the Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Pan-American Federation of Labor, 37.

²⁴Edwin Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism: the Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army, 1910-1940 (Albuquerque, 1968), 73.

to suppress the attempted golpe de estado.²⁵ Juan Rico, president of the sixth CROM convention, sent a telegram to President Coolidge congratulating him for "the just and righteous attitude" he had assumed during the rebellion and expressed hope for continued good relations between the two countries.²⁶

THE FELIPE CARRILLO PUERTO MURDER

Another aspect of the de la Huerta rebellion was the Felipe Carrillo Puerto assassination and its aftermath. Carrillo Puerto,

²⁵José Petricioli in El Excelsior, April 6, 1964; Petricioli, interview, Mexico City, June 25, 1968. Coolidge on January 7, 1924 placed an embargo on the shipment of arms or munitions of war from the United States to Mexico, excepting "such exportations of arms or munitions of war as are approved by the Government of the United States for shipment to the Government of Mexico which has been recognized by the Government of the United States, and such arms and munitions for industrial or commercial uses as may from time to time be exported with the consent of the Secretary of State." Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1924 (Washington, 1925), II, 428.

²⁶The telegram was as follows: "THE SIXTY (SIC) ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE MEXICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR CONFEDERACION REGIONAL OBRERA MEXICANA REFLECTING THE SENTIMENTS OF THE WORKERS OF MEXICO HAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO EXPRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES WHOSE GOVERNMENT YOU SO NOBLY REPRESENT FOR THE JUST AND RIGHTEOUS ATTITUDE YOU ASSUMED DURING THE RECENT MILITARY TREACHERY HEADED BY ADOLFO DE LA HUERTA THUS HELPING THE WORKERS AND GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO NOBLY REPRESENTED BY PRESIDENT OBREGON TO DEFEND THE RULE OF DEMOCRACY AND LIBERTY PRINCIPLES WHICH REORGANIZED WORKERS OF MEXICO ARE SUSTAINING AND DEFENDING THE WORKERS OF MEXICO FEEL AND HOPE THAT THE RELATIONS OF FRIENDSHIP EXISTING AT PRESENT BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES WILL ENDURE ETERNALLY TO OUR MUTUAL HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY." Department of State, Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between the United States and Mexico, 1910-1929 (Washington, 1959), Microfilm. 29 rolls. November 22, 1924, 711.12/534. Hereinafter cited as "U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929."

a cromista and governor of Yucatan, was loyal to the government of Alvaro Obregón.²⁷ He and several others fled the de la huertistas, but were captured after their small boat landed in Lerma. Carrillo Puerto, three of his brothers, and nine other civilians, were taken to Mérida where they were "judged," condemned to death by orders of de la Huerta, and shot by Colonel Richardez Broca.²⁸ In an excited meeting of the Chamber of Deputies on January 15, 1924, Deputy Morones threatened drastic action and "tremendous vengeance" against cooperatista deputies.²⁹ He accused the deputies of directing the execution of Carrillo Puerto, opposing labor at every opportunity and threatened:

The Cooperatistas may rest assured the time is coming with greater rapidity than they believe when they will meet punishment for their crimes. They are greatly mistaken in believing that their immunity will be respected, because labor takes no heed of it, not even if the Government affords them protection.³⁰

Reprisals began that day; cooperatistas Juan Pastoriza and Mariano Castello were fired upon on their way home.

²⁷Alba, Historia del movimiento obrero en América Latina, 177; José Petricioli, interview, Mexico City, June 30, 1968.

²⁸"Galería de honor: el crimen cometido por Richardez Broca, inmortalizó al líder yucateco," C.R.O.M., January 1, 1938, 3. The A.F.L. headquarters sent a telegram to de la Huerta to protest the executions.

²⁹New York Times, January 17, 1924.

³⁰Ibid.

BUCARELI CONFERENCES AND FIELD JURADO ASSASSINATION

An important aftereffect of the Carrillo Puerto murder was the accord known as the Bucareli agreement. This was occasioned by the assassination of Senator Francisco Field Jurado, a de la huertista leader.

On May 2, 1923, President Harding appointed Charles Beecher Warren, former Ambassador to Japan, and John Barton Payne, former Secretary of Interior, as American commissioners to meet two Mexican commissioners, Ramón Ross and Fernando González Roa. Two unsettled issues to be considered were (1) the confiscation of American-owned lands to provide ejidos or communal lands for villages, and (2) the dispute regarding possible nationalization of the sub-soil deposits whereby rights possessed by American property owners would be confiscated. The preliminaries were known as the Bucareli Conferences and named for its meeting place, No. 85 Bucareli Street, in Mexico City. Consultations from May 14 to August 13, 1923 involved what was fundamentally a "horse trade." President Harding granted diplomatic recognition and support of Obregón in return for a settlement of the claims of American proprietors and a verbal understanding that the Mexican Government would not apply the 1917 Constitution retroactively against American-owned petroleum companies.

The Special Claims Convention, formulated at the Bucareli discussions, was approved by the necessary two-thirds of the Mexican Senate in December, 1923, shortly before the end of the

regular legislative session. It became necessary in January, 1924 to call a special session of the Senate to approve the General Claims Convention. Official action by the Senate on the General Claims Convention required a two-thirds quorum, or the presence of thirty-eight senators. Senator Field Jurado led the opposition against approving the Bucareli agreements because they would be the price for United States recognition of the Obregón regime, and the "key" to open United States arsenals for the suppression of the de la Huerta uprising. Under Field Jurado's direction, the de la huertista senators boycotted the Senate so that no quorum could be obtained. The majority demanded that substitute senators replace those who absented themselves, but Field Jurado managed his men skilfully and none of them avoided the ten consecutive sessions necessary to permit their replacement.

In the Chamber of Deputies on January 14, 1924, Morones orating with his usual vigor, referred to the recent Carrillo Puerto assassination and threatened cooperatistas in the legislature. The atmosphere was tense, everyone except Morones was silent. He gave a long vindictive speech in which he warned, "For each one who falls like Carrillo Puerto, at least five who serve the reaction will fall."³¹ He threatened direct action against the cooperatista deputies and senators supporting de la

³¹El Universal, January 15, 1924; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 237; Alessio Robles, Desfile sangriento, 37-38.

Huerta, unless the President ordered their immediate removal from Mexico City.³²

One week later Morones addressed a workers' meeting at the Venecia Movie Theater, and was applauded deliriously when he advocated revenge for the slain governor saying, "The war is without quarter, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life."³³ In response to this menacing language, Field Jurado sent Morones the following strongly-worded telegram the next day:

Francisco Field Jurado, a Campeche senator, has the pleasure of advising you that he has learned of the 'enlightening' speech which you pronounced yesterday, Sunday, before your simpletons, and is at your disposition in his home, No. 134 Fourth Colima Street in this capital, where he awaits you and your agents with attentions which are merited.

Also he advises that morning and afternoon he goes to the Senate to protect the interests of the nation which traitors wish to violate, and he will vote against the antipatriotic conventions and he will not leave this capital but will await here the triumph of the liberating army.

Your agent, Colonel Preve, has sent me warnings....³⁴

³²Diario de los debates de la Cámara de Diputados, January 14, 1924; El Universal, January 15, 1924; El Demócrata, January 24, 1924; Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 102. Referring to the Yucatan governor's death, Morones openly stated that the "Cooperatist deputies are responsible, cowards, lack virility, and we must punish them with vengeance." Emilio Portes Gil, Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana: un tratado de interpretación histórica (México, D.F., 1964), 366-367.

³³El Demócrata, January 21, 1924; Alfonso Romandía Ferreira in El Universal, July 4, 1956; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 237.

³⁴Alessio Robles, Desfile sangriento, 58-59; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 237-238.

Morones intensified his efforts, and the senator's challenge was answered two days later. Leaving the Senate, Field Jurado was followed by two men who were quickly joined by three others waiting in a Dodge outside the Palacio Nacional. The senator boarded a streetcar, rode to the corner of Córdoba Street where he descended at 3:30 P.M. The unknown individuals awaiting him in the Dodge were joined by others in a Ford. When Field Jurado was on Tabasco Street, the assailants began shooting at him from their automobiles. Eight bullets were fired into his soon lifeless body.³⁵

At approximately the same time that Field Jurado was gunned down, cromistas, under orders from Morones, kidnapped Senators Ildefonso Vázquez, Francisco Trejo, and Enrique del Castillo, who were later released unharmed.³⁶ Senators Federico Góngalez, Garza, Gerzayn Ugarte and other cooperatistas had left the capital several days earlier to avoid being victims of Morones' thugs. Others hired bodyguards to protect them, and several armed encounters occurred between the rival pistoleros.

Vito Alessio Robles arose in the Senate to declare that, although he never belonged to the cooperatistas, he severely condemned Morones' recent strong-arm tactics and crimes. He accused

³⁵El Excelsior, January 24, 1924; Miguel Gil in La Prensa, March 11, 1938; El Demócrata, January 24, 1924; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 238; Mario Mena, Alvaro Obregón, historia militar y política, 1912-1929 (México, D.F., 1960), 89.

³⁶Miguel Gil in La Prensa, March 15, 1938; Alfonso Romandía Ferreira in El Universal, July 5, 1926; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 238; Parkes, A History of Mexico, 380.

Morones of being the intellectual author of Field Jurado's assassination, of kidnapping three senators, and proposed that all senators vote for Morones' arrest.³⁷ The resulting motion relating to the arrest was toned down so that it was meaningless, and CROM renewed its attacks on Alessio Robles, Morones' most consistent accuser of the crime, reviving the old charge that Alessio sought to control the Military Manufacturing Establishments.

José Vasconcelos, Minister of Public Education, after being informed that Morones had one of Field's murderers hiding in his office, disgustedly wired his resignation to Obregón. The President, who was in Celaya, quickly issued a statement that:

...if the labor organizations exercise reprisals against political parties which have assassinated their leaders like Carrillo Puerto and others, this is an affair which I am not called upon to resolve; but in my character as President I am called upon to attempt to prevent such acts or to consign their authors to the respective authorities when such acts are committed; and when such an act is attempted to give the appearance of a defense of the Public Administration, that I shall neither accept nor tolerate.³⁸

Although Obregón did not mention Morones by name, this amounted to a direct public accusation of CROM as the senator's murderer.

³⁷Miguel Gil in La Prensa, March 15, 1938; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 238. As early as 1920 Alessio Robles accused Morones of being the "omnipotent deceiver of the workers." Desfile sangriento, 7.

³⁸The President's message was given front page coverage in El Universal, January 29, 1924.

After Obregón pointed an accusing finger, Morones was called to testify about his possible role in the crime. In a court appearance on February 7 before the judge of the Superior Tribunal, Morones went through the formality of explaining that he neither knew who killed the senator, nor could explain the recent kidnappings. Both he and Colonel José Preve, an intimate friend and gunman of CROM, pointed out that considering Field Jurado had supported union activities it was illogical to blame the labor organization for his assassination.³⁹ After Morones' preliminary explanation, Obregón made no attempt to fasten guilt on CROM leaders. Justice proved ineffectual, the senator's murder went unpunished.

Morones always publicly claimed his innocence of the crime. According to him, CROM was disinterested in the Bucareli discussions and Field Jurado represented no danger to labor. He explained that his threat of "direct action" meant strikes, boycotts, and other recourses, not murder. Morones alleged that the Campeche senator had numerous enemies such as Sotel de Regil, a known political foe.⁴⁰ Morones claims that José Vasconcelos launched the rumor that Morones was the intellectual author of the homicide.

Whether Morones was guilty or not, and circumstantial evidence points that way, he tactlessly placed himself in a politically indiscreet position. His threats exposed him to these accusations,

³⁹Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 240.

⁴⁰Luis N. Morones in El Universal, August 27, 1956; Alessio Robles, Desfile sangriento, 110.

as did his noticeable lack of scruples concerning the matter; and the candidacy of José Preve, Field Jurado's accused assassin, as Laborista candidate for the governorship of Campeche, Field Jurado's former position.

In 1957 Morones was asked, "Could you tell me something about the career and personality of Colonel José G. Preve"? In Morones' written reply to Professor J.W.F. Dulles, who had interviewed him one week earlier in Morones' home, the 67 year old labor leader briefly described Preve as: "un elemento de valía y que prestó sus servicios a la Revolución en Tabasco, en el campo militar; que abrazó la causa obrera en Campeche y que se distinguió por su actividad en ese terrano."⁴¹ Morones omitted Preve's alleged role in Field Jurado's assassination.

Carleton Beals, a free-lance correspondent whom Morones "trusted for some reason," was an eye witness to some unusual events concerning Field Jurado's murder.⁴² Hired by the New York Nation to write an article about the worker and peasant volunteers the Mexican government was mobilizing in special battalions, Beals visited Morones seeking this information. During Beals' interview with Morones, Morones' secretary handed the labor leader a message from Field Jurado. Morones said something to this person, and

⁴¹Morones to Dulles, February 16, 1957, photocopy, L.S.U. Archives.

⁴²Beals to Buford, February 19, 1970, L.S.U. Archives. Morones had "looked over" Beals' chapter "Labor and Reconstruction" in that author's 1923 Mexico: an Interpretation and aided him to secure data.

shortly two of the "hardest boiled thugs" Beals had ever seen, entered. After showing the telegram to the American correspondent, Morones asked the gunmen, "Do you know what to do?" "Then do it," he commanded.

Beals departed, called the Senate, and discovered that Field Jurado had not yet arrived. He then called the senator's home. As an anonymous caller, Beals spoke with a lady and warned her saying, "His life is in grave danger. If you value his life, do not permit him to go to the Senate tomorrow. If he does he will be shot down. He may be killed anyway."

The American journalist had another appointment later that day with Morones who had promised to give him full details, photographs, and a pass to the training camps. Once again the secretary entered and whispered something to Morones. Morones gave Beals "a sharp glance," and ordered, "Send them in." The same gunmen came to Morones' side and the three calmly discussed where the two should hide until "the matter blew over." One was given money to go to Yucatan via Tampico. Beals does not state where the other accomplice went after Morones paid them for assassinating Field Jurado.⁴³

⁴³Ibid.; Beals, Glass Houses, 195-197; interview, Baton Rouge, April 13, 1970. Both Morones' widow and son asserted Morones' innocence when this writer interviewed them in Mexico City in 1968. Alfonso Sánchez Madariaga, prominent official in the Confederación de Trabajadores de México, stated Morones' guilt is hearsay and cannot be proven, interview, Mexico City, August 26, 1968. The following are a few persons who have charged that Morones was guilty of the political crime: Agustín Zapata Casasola, interview, Mexico City, July 16, 1968; Emilio Portes Gil, Autobiografía de la Revolución

During the de la Huerta rebellion in the early months of 1924, Morones invited Beals and government and labor officials to a barbecue given in an orchard near Mexico City. Beals was amazed at the display of nonchalance shown by almost everyone there. The de la huertista enemies were close to Mexico City, yet the obregonistas calmly ate, drank, and played cards. Beals reported that Morones "was friendly to everybody, and they were nearly all his close followers, but somehow never seemed quite to unbend. He sat rigidly in a chair and scarcely circulated. He did not take off his coat."⁴⁴

As Secretary of Public Education, José Vasconcelos expelled several students for violating rules against defacing school walls. Encouraged by Morones' agents, students violently rioted in the streets. Shots were fired; several students and a police leader were killed. Beals who was again an eye witness when Morones dispatched his thugs, remembered that:

Mexicana, interview, Mexico City, July 26, 1968; Miguel Gil in La Prensa, February 5, 1938; General Arnulfo R. Gómez according to his personal secretary Fernando López Portillo in La Prensa, February 5, 1938; Romandía Ferreira in El Universal, July 5, 1956; Ernest Gruening, "The News from Mexico," Nation, CXXXVII (September 5, 1928), 223; Valente Quintana in El Universal, September 11, 1956; H. Flores Sánchez in El Universal, November 3, 1956; and Roberto Blanco Moheno, Crónica de la Revolución Mexicana (5a ed.; México, D.F., 1966), III, 11. Liwin, not specifically mentioning Morones by name, states, "The CROM...even assassinated opposition Senator Francisco Field Jurado." Mexican Militarism, 60.

⁴⁴Beals to Buford, February 19, 1970; interview, Baton Rouge, April 14, 1970.

During a revolt when the government was hard-pressed and the rebels had taken nearby Puebla, I was present when he ordered his strong-arm gang to take over the patio of the Ministry of Education to terrorize Minister Vasconcelos (sic) who had come out in favor of the rebels.⁴⁵

Vasconcelos charged that Morones intended to win over the students for the 1924 election in which Calles was a presidential candidate. Vasconcelos, who disliked cromistas in general and Morones in particular, told his Education employees not to pay the ten per cent of their salaries Morones attempted to deduct to support Calles' candidacy.

TWO HUNDRED BULLETS

The P.L.M. had disputes with President Obregón toward the end of his term. Obregón refused to appoint its members to such important posts as labor attachés at Mexican embassies.⁴⁶ When during the last days of Obregón's administration an assassination attempt was made on Morones' life by a man who was one of the president's closest followers, CROM leaders considered it another proof that Obregón was determined to destroy them.⁴⁷ The events of November 12, 1924, help illustrate the Spanish novelist Blasco Ibañez's observation of Mexican mores at this time. "Revolvers,"

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Vicent Fuentes Díaz, Los partidos políticos en México, II, 23 in Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 278.

⁴⁷Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 103; Mary Margaret Harker, "Organization of Labor in Mexico since 1910" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1937), 49.

he said, "are as indispensable as neckties to a gentleman's wardrobe."⁴⁸ Insulting debates in the Chamber of Deputies frequently resulted in shooting affrays where legislators engaged in bitter controversies and their heated verbal attacks occasionally led to personal encounters involving physical violence. Gunfights between politicians were so common in the twenties that newspapers often had cartoons satirizing the incidents.⁴⁹

During a routine discussion in the Chamber of Deputies on November 12, 1924, a vigorous argument arose between Deputy Pavón Silva, a member of the majority group, and Deputy Manlio Fabio Altamirano, a Laborite. Insults were exchanged and both men left the Chamber, pistol in hand, and headed for the corridor. Colleagues followed, some with the purpose of keeping the disputants apart. Cooler counsel prevailed and the two were dissuaded from fighting.

In this tense atmosphere General José María Sánchez, former governor of Puebla, took the speaker's stand and unequivocally demanded that Morones retract charges he had delivered against Sánchez earlier in the Iris Theatre. The general violently objected to Morones' having made these accusations "behind his back" rather than in a straightforward manner, and warned that

⁴⁸Blasco Ibañez, Mexico in Revolution, 160.

⁴⁹El Universal, on June 19, 1924, printed a cartoon of a robot. The caption read, "Masculine Fashion-Model especially designed for wear in the next session of the Chamber of Deputies." A similar drawing showed a smoking cannon barrel mounted on four wheels as a "1928 Model Roadster especially designed for deputies and politicians." El Universal, April 20, 1927.

unless the charges were immediately withdrawn he would name seconds to arrange a settlement "on the field of honor." Deputy Morones, with his machismo openly challenged, adamantly refused and shouted, "I am more of a man than you. You are a coward." He yelled that the matter between Sánchez and himself could be settled instantly. In the confusion which followed, the presiding officer, quickly withdrew from the panic-stricken scene; his place was taken by Colonel Filiberto Gómez, whose ringing of a small bell to quiet the pandemonium was ineffective. During the heated verbal exchange, some of Morones' and Sánchez's foresighted adherents brandished their pistols and rushed to the outside corridor. While Morones and Sánchez were screaming hostile and provocative words at each other, another deputy, Jesús Ponce, started shooting. The Chamber adjourned immediately. Deputies fled into the hall and street. Not only did angry words fly, but 200 bullets did also. When the shooting ended, an aged deputy, Leocadio Guerrero who had taken no part in the wild affair lay dying, shot twice through the chest. Morones was shot through his left side, the bullet grazing his left lung.⁵⁰ A sign placed in the Chamber of Deputies later that day said that in view of the seriousness of Morones' wound, and the possibility of complications, doctors had forbidden visits.⁵¹

⁵⁰El Universal, November 16, 1924; Gustavo Casasola, Historia gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana, 1900-1960 (4 vols.; México, D.F.), III, 1696; New York Times, November 13, 14, 1924; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 368; Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage, 474.

⁵¹Casasola, Historia gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana, III, 1697.

Laborites contended that it had been a premeditated attempt to assassinate their leader.⁵² In an inquiry conducted before Licenciado Vázquez Santaella, agent of the Public Ministry on November 16, Morones declared that the day of the attempted assassination his servant received several anonymous telephone calls advising him that his employer must not miss that day's session which "would deal with matters of great importance and require his presence."⁵³ If these calls were placed, it does not necessarily prove that obregonistas made them. A cromista could have wished to inform Morones of the importance of that session's agenda. As was expected, the prosecuting attorney decided it was impossible to determine blame for Guerrero's death; the elderly politician had been caught in the gunfire from both sides.

GOMPERS LAUDS MORONES

Because of his convalescence, Morones was unable to attend the forty-fourth annual convention of the A.F.L., which coincided with the sixth CROM meeting held in Ciudad Juárez November 17-26, 1924. Gompers, the day following Morones' being wounded, telegraphed CROM offices. The American referred to "the valiant, brilliant leader and defender of the salaried and great mass of the Mexican

⁵²El Universal, November 16, 1924; El Demócrata, November 16, 1924; New York Times, November 14, 1924; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 268; Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage, 474; Ernest Gruening, "Emerging Mexico," Nation, CXXI (July 1, 1925), 28. One year earlier Morones had challenged another opposition congressman to "enter the street" with him. Diario de los debates de la Camara de Diputados, October 29, 1923, 11.

⁵³El Demócrata, November 14, 16, 1924; El Universal, November 16, 1924.

nation," adding that "the working class of Mexico cannot be deprived of the great defender of its rights, liberties and interests."⁵⁴ Upon the Mexican delegation's arrival in El Paso, Gompers proclaimed, "It is true that Morones is the genuine representative of laborism in Mexico."⁵⁵ He told CROM representatives that the bullet "which found lodgment in the body of that great Mexican labor leader, Luis N. Morones, was a blow aimed at the democratic Republic of Mexico." His remark was also embodied in a formal public statement issued at the A.F.L. headquarters in Washington.⁵⁶

On November 17, 1924, both conventions were officially inaugurated; CROM's in Ciudad Juárez, and the A.F.L.'s in El Paso. That afternoon delegates to the CROM conference led by a Mexican army band playing martial music marched en masse across the bridge to meet the American delegates. Since Morones was unable to attend, Eduardo Moneda, member of the CROM executive council, and Juan Rico, Grupo Acción member and close personal advisor of Morones, headed CROM representatives.⁵⁷ During the opening conference Gompers again praised Morones when he said, "Obregón, Calles, Morones, and Treviño are all perfectly united for the benefit and well-being of Mexico."⁵⁸

⁵⁴El Demócrata, November 14, 1924.

⁵⁵Ibid., November 17, 1924.

⁵⁶New York Times, November 16, 18, 1924.

⁵⁷Ibid., November 16, 1924.

⁵⁸El Universal, November 19, 1924. Ricardo Treviño was the current CROM secretary general.

His remarks, translated by C.N. Idar, were applauded enthusiastically. Juan Rico read a salutation from Morones which expressed his regret at missing the joint labor meeting, and congratulated Gompers for his accomplishments.⁵⁹ The congress terminated with the unanimous election of Gompers, Morones, Wright, and Vargas as president, vice-president, English-Language secretary and Spanish-Language secretary respectively.

MEXICAN EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

An important issue dealt with in the Second P.A.F.L. Congress in 1919 was Mexican emigration to the United States for a given number of years; Mexico was not excepted. Morones, who was present at this convocation as a fraternal delegate, believed that the A.F.L. was making a serious mistake. He broached the subject in the Second P.A.F.L. Congress by introducing a resolution, which was adopted, requiring that the A.F.L. justify its action to the congress. Gompers, in a brief history of immigration into his country, argued his nation's case. Morones accepted his explanation and replied that he sought clarification primarily to set a precedent by which any member union acting contrary to the spirit of the founding conference's principles, must defend its action to other P.A.F.L. members.⁶⁰ This second congress set the pattern for later ones, and demonstrated a working alliance between Morones

⁵⁹El Demócrata, November 20, 1924.

⁶⁰Proceedings of the Second P.A.F.L. Congress, 36 in Snow, "Samuel Gompers and the Pan-American Federation," 101.



Courtesy Berta Peña Viuda de Morones



Courtesy La Prensa

LUIS N. MORONES IN 1923 AND 1924

and Gompers which was strengthened in following years.

Gompers' views on immigration are well known. His first concern was the protection of American workers, and as a surplus of labor tended to lower wages, he opposed any measure that would augment the labor reservoir beyond that which was needed. Although he believed that persons had the right to live, work, and travel anywhere they chose, he knew from practical experience that it was better for the world's workers to strive for higher wages and better conditions in their own country rather than emigrate to do so.

Mexican labor problems were not new in the United States; however, the influx did not reach alarming proportions before the 1920's. This is not to say Mexicans were not causing racial, economic, social and political difficulties before that decade. During 1913-14 when there was much unemployment in Los Angeles, American laborers vented their wrath against the railroads for using Mexican labor brought in from south of the border for construction projects. When these projects were completed, the Mexicans, having become accustomed to the United States, did not return to Mexico, but migrated instead to urban areas. Unskilled for the most part, they were the first to feel the impact of unemployment and constituted the heaviest encumbrance on the relief

rolls of charitable organizations.⁶¹ The A.F.L.'s fears about the effect of the Mexicans on the postwar labor situation appeared to be confirmed during the Steel Strike of 1919 when large numbers of Mexican strike-breakers were brought from the Southwest to operate plants in the Chicago area. Another A.F.L. criticism was that some Mexican workers joined the I.W.W. They either believed in the principles and politics of that organization, or joined expecting that this affiliation would better their wages and position.

Before the 1920's the A.F.L.'s attention was concentrated primarily on Oriental and European immigrants. Oriental immigration was effectively diminished early in the century, and that from Europe was curtailed by the promulgation of restrictive legislation, beginning with a literacy test in 1917 and culminating with the National Origins Act of 1924. At the time when it appeared that the A.F.L. had closed the front door on cheap labor the back door was wide open. Approximately 900,000 Canadians crossed the northern border, and half a million Mexicans were counted legally crossing the southern border.

Agrarian, socio-political, and economic factors in the Mexican background were the chief causes of emigration. Better economic

⁶¹Louis B. Perry and Richard S. Perry, A History of the Los Angeles Labor Movement, 1911-1941 (Berkeley, 1963), 11. Mexicans being used to undermine American labor struck at one of Gompers' basic fears. In 1916, some employers either brought in Mexican strikebreakers or threatened to do so. "There must be understanding and cooperation between the workers of Mexico and the U.S.," Gompers wrote, "in order that neither may permit themselves to be used for the undoing of all." American Federationist, July, 1916, 575.

conditions in the United States attracted Mexican workers, as did the postwar boom in the United States in 1919 and 1920. Moreover, disturbed political and social conditions in Mexico encouraged the exodus of workers. Males of military age who refused to enlist in the revolutionary armies found it advantageous to leave Mexico. In Mexico in 1920 when the presidential succession occasioned political disorders, in 1923, during the de la Huerta rebellion, and in 1926 when the political uprising had religious overtones, the number of Mexican emigrants to the United States increased considerably over pre-1919 figures. A majority of those departing in 1926 originated in the regions where religious insurrections had developed, namely: Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Jalisco.⁶²

The fact that most A.F.L. unions were international with substantial membership in Canada complicated restricting immigration from that region. Immigration from Mexico, however, was different, and throughout the 1920's the A.F.L. attempted to limit it. After Gompers failed to include Mexico among the countries subject to the National Origins Act of 1924, William Green, Gompers' successor as president, tried another procedure.

Realizing that Mexican immigration into the United States was stimulated by the selective immigration law which exempted native-born

⁶²The Mexicans flowed into the American Southwest mainly living in California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and Colorado. They worked where employment was available for non-skilled and semi-skilled laborers -- railroad construction, repair, and maintenance; agriculture, and other related activities.

Mexicans from quota restrictions, Green proposed that CROM participate in a joint conference on immigration. CROM accepted the proposal, the meeting was set for July 23, 1925, but Morones became ill, and the conference was postponed until August 27, 1925.⁶³

Morones, Eduardo Moneda, and Robert Haberman constituted the Mexican delegation; Green and Matthew Woll headed the A.F.L. representatives. In dealing with the problem Morones recommended that the participants be tactful, practical, and consider two guidelines: first, the development of those principles upon which immigration should take place; and second, how to regulate immigration in accord with these precepts. Morones concurred with Green that the labor movement of one country should not seek to settle the issue through a special advantage to itself over the other country.⁶⁴

The conference revealed that the Mexicans were concerned about the questions created by Mexican immigration into the United States, but for different reasons than those that disturbed the A.F.L. Cromistas were worried about the economic and social plight of the Mexican emigrants, and the discrimination they encountered in the United States, often at the hands of A.F.L. unions. Morones and his delegates were intent upon securing guarantees from the A.F.L. that Mexicans in the United States would receive the same treatment from A.F.L. unions that native-born Americans received. Morones suggested two ways the labor organizations could end this discrimination:

⁶³Library of Congress. William Green Letterbooks. Microfilm. Green to Moneda, June 12, 15, 1925.

⁶⁴American Federationist, September, 1925, 921.

first, they could establish a system of international union cards which would guarantee a union member full rights in the counterpart to his union if he moved across the border; second, they could make an effort to organize emigrating workers before they left their native lands.⁶⁵

Green and the A.F.L. delegates, on the other hand, were determined to cut off Mexican immigration at its source. They proposed the acceptance of voluntary restraint. In effect, this meant that CROM would pressure the Mexican government into curtailing emigration to the United States. It was believed that Morones, being President Calles' "right-hand man" would be able to affect emigration; thus it would be easier for the Mexicans to prevent departures more easily than the United States could restrict arrivals.

The conference ended with a compromise declaration. The A.F.L. succeeded in having the final declaration call for the two organizations to press their respective government for the "adoption and enforcement of this new principle of voluntary self-restraint." To satisfy CROM, a statement affirming that immigrants should be guaranteed equal opportunity to join unions and equal

⁶⁵C.R.O.M., October 1, 1925, 1. The following enumeration of Mexican immigrants legally entering the United States in the 1920's reveals the increase which prompted attempts at voluntary restraint: 1920, 52,361; 1921, 30,758; 1922, 19,551; 1923, 63,768; 1924, 89,336; 1925, 32,964; 1926, 43,316; 1927, 67,721; 1928, 59,016; and 1929, 40,154. United States, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, 1960), 58.

status within them was written into the terminal agreement. However, there was no compact to establish the most important means of facilitating this -- the international union card.⁶⁶ The conference also recommended the creation of a joint committee consisting of two members from each organization, said committee to work through the P.A.F.L. for the continuous study of immigration and emigration and the problems arising therefrom.

Upon his return to Mexico, Morones emphasized that he in no way interpreted the agreement to mean diminished Mexican emigration. He construed the section dealing with equal rights for alien workers to apply to Americans working in Mexico, and announced that this meant that they should not be entitled to higher wages and better working conditions than their Latin counterparts. Concerning voluntary self-restraint, Morones asserted that CROM had always advised Mexican laborers not to leave Mexico and would continue to do so. Those who chose to migrate, however, would be instructed not to depress wage levels in the United States, an empty, meaningless gesture.⁶⁷

The policy of self-restraint did not succeed and its failure resulted in an attempt to arrange a second plan urging the same

⁶⁶C.R.O.M., October 1, 1925, 1.

⁶⁷Ibid., 4-7. Morones made declarations to the Mexican press in which he showed himself extremely pleased with the results reached in that meeting. Among other things, Morones said that one of the resolutions adopted was that Mexican workers would have the same rights in the American Union as nationals of that country. El Excelsior, October 13, 1925.

concept. Green convinced cromista leaders that the joint committee should meet in Washington concurrently with the fifth congress of the nearly defunct P.A.F.L. Morones, Moneda, Yúdice, Canuto Vargas, and Robert Haberman represented CROM in the 1927 meeting.⁶⁸ The A.F.L. promised not to press for inclusion of Mexico under the official American quota and CROM agreed to pressure the Mexican government to enact emigration legislation, to dissuade workers from emigrating to the United States and Canada, and to encourage Mexicans who emigrated to join the relevant unions.⁶⁹

Despite attacks by delegates from the Southwest and the Pacific coast, the agreement was ratified in the Los Angeles A.F.L. convention later that year. Green, convinced that Morones was sincerely trying to restrict immigration to the United States, tried to maintain his goodwill.

⁶⁸"Los delegados de la C.R.O.M. a la convención Pan-Americana," C.R.O.M., July 15, 1927, 35.

⁶⁹CROM and A.F.L. were actively engaged in promoting the organization of Mexican workers in the United States. Bulletin of the Pan American Union, September, 1926, 938. A.F.L. leaders believed Morones able to influence Calles' labor policy. Commenting on CROM's position in October, 1927, Green stated: "Some have said there is an inseparable relationship between the Mexican Federation of Labor and the Calles government; some have said that the Mexican Federation of Labor dictates the policies of the Mexican government. No man can go to Mexico without coming from there with a deep impression that the Mexican Federation of Labor exercises a tremendous influence in the legislative and governmental affairs of Mexico." A.F.L. Proceedings, 1927, 95-98 in Harvey Levenstein, "The AFL and Mexican Immigration in the 1920s: an Experiment in Labor Diplomacy," Hispanic American Historical Review (May, 1968), 217.

After American organized labor made an unsuccessful attempt to urge Mexico to restrain her nationals from emigrating to the United States, this small yet powerful section of the general public actively joined in demanding legislation to limit it. The 1928 A.F.L. New Orleans convention reversed the decision of the previous year, voted to abandon the policy of self-restraint, and to bring Mexico under the quota provisions of the immigration law. Thus, the organization finally removed its influence from opposing restrictions on Mexican labor and instructed its lobby in the United States Congress to demand that it curtail such entries.

CHAPTER V

HEIGHT OF POWER, 1924-28

In evaluating Morones' role in Mexico and in trying to determine to what extent he was a part of the ruling sector, a number of factors should be considered: (1) the changing pattern of CROM both while it was outside the political system and later when it operated from within that system; (2) the influence of CROM ideologies, (have CROM ideologies served as an aggregating factor or have they disrupted the unity of the labor movement?); (3) and the position of Morones' CROM in the political structure; that is, the significance of cromistas and their quantitative weight in influencing national decisions. This will require a look at the position taken by CROM in times of crises and in times of relative prosperity when social tensions may have augmented or relaxed. The Calles administration, 1924-28, offers an excellent case study for this appraisal.

CALLES-CROM PACT

Calles appeared as the rising political personage on the Mexican scene and Morones and his political party switched their support from Obregón to him. In September, 1923, Morones resigned as the head of the government military factories to take charge of Calles' presidential campaign. The following month, Morones was one of the leaders in a "radical" Calles parade which resulted in a series of clashes and five deaths, but from which Morones emerged

unhurt.¹ Not unexpectedly, Obregón's marked preference for agrarian interests during 1923 diverted Labor Party support into the welcome arms of Calles who needed the party as a prop for his future administration. Having seen labor emerge as a stabilizing force after a decade of revolution, its strength in helping to crush the de la Huerta rebellion, and Morones' valuable friendship with the A.F.L., Calles was convinced of the Labor Party's importance.

At a labor meeting in the Iris Theatre, Calles boasted: "I am frankly a Laborite and an ardent defender of the rights guaranteed to labor by Article 123 of the Constitution of 1917. I have never made a secret of this."² In April, 1924 when asked by reporters "What is your opinion of your partisans in the Labor Party?" Calles responded:

The action of the men who direct the Labor Party, like that of all the leaders who are affiliated with the Calles cause, has demonstrated that they possess a proper conception of their duty and that they are conscientiously moved more by the necessities of the Republic than by their own personal or group ambitions.³

Subsequent events during Calles' administration revealed the falsity of his statement.

Realizing that he could not capture agrarian support from any Obregón candidate, and that labor was more conservative than the agraristas who had already committed excesses attempting to gain a

¹New York Times, November 13, 1924.

²El Demócrata, September 20, 1923.

³Plutarco Elías Calles in El Demócrata, April 18, 1924.

more rapid land division, Calles entered into a written agreement with Morones. The secret pact stipulated that Calles would grant funds and facilities to help sustain CROM, and that he would gradually dissolve the Mexican Army beginning within one year after becoming president.⁴ Replacement of army with workers' battallions, if it was actually considered, did not happen. One explanation why Calles failed to dissolve the military is that the English seized the arms he had bought as contraband in Germany, a mission carried out by his intimate friend, General Francisco Serrano.⁵

Following Calles' election, Morones, addressing the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, asserted that "the cause triumphed rather than the man."⁶ During Calles' visit to Washington before assuming the presidency, Gompers referred to him as "Mexico's Man of Destiny."

⁴Fernando Medina Ruíz, Calles, un destino melancólico (México, D.F., 1960), 95-96; Aquiles P. Moctezuma, El conflicto religioso de 1926: sus orígenes, su desarrollo, su solución (2da ed.; México, D.F., 1960), II, 307-308; Joaquín Marquez Montiel, La doctrina social de la iglesia y la legislación obrera mexicana (2da ed.; México, D.F., 1958), 89; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, 387; Supreme Council, Knights of Columbus, Mexico, Bolshevism the Menace, 14-18 in Wilfrid Hardy Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929 (Stanford, 1931), 344. Naturally CROM denied the pact claiming the "revolutionary army has always held our respect, defended the ideals of the workers, and moreover is formed of elements originated from the proletarian class." "Una compañía de ignominia pura," C.R.O.M., January 15, 1936, 12.

⁵Moctezuma, El conflicto religioso de 1926, II, 308. According to the American Consul in Mexico City, the military watched Morones closely, and feared that his agricultural farm-labor units might be a step toward disbanding the army which they "would bitterly oppose by violence." Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, Weddell to Secretary of State, May 5, 1925, 812.504/634.

⁶Diario de los debates de la Cámara de Diputados, September 27, 1924, 13.

His observation was partly correct; two men would determine the future of Mexico, Calles and Morones. Calles was the general; Morones, the civilian general.

CALLES' INAUGURATION

For Calles' inauguration two special trains provided by the Mexican government conveyed CROM and A.F.L. delegates from their conventions and joint meetings in El Paso to Mexico City.⁷ Soldiers rode in the cars; an attempt to assassinate Morones had recently been made and it was feared that subversives might attack the train conveying the labor leaders from the two countries.

Calles was inaugurated November 30, 1924 amidst colorful ceremonies in which 50,000 persons, among whom were many industrial workers, peasants, and sandaled or barefoot Indians transported at public expense from various sections of Mexico. Confetti filled the air. Balloons were released and airplanes circled overhead. In a brief ceremony Calles took the oath of office from Colonel Filiberto Gómez, President of the Mexican Congress. Thereupon hundreds of doves were released and this graceful gesture was followed by singing, shouting, cheering, bands playing, and cannons firing. During the ceremonies, cabinet appointments were handed out by Romeo Ortega, and later the appointees, including Ministry of

⁷American Federationist, December, 1924, 985. Gompers in November, 1923 opined that the CROM was backing Calles, the exponent of "the principles of freedom, democracy, and human progress." A.F.L. news release to the New York Times, November 8, 1923. The elderly labor leader died too early to see the harsh realities of Calles' iron rule.



PRESIDENT PLUTARCO ELIAS CALLES



Courtesy Archivo Casasola

PRESIDENT CALLES AND HIS CABINET

Seated: General Joaquín Amaro (War and Navy), Dr. J. M. Puig Casauranc (Public Education), Ing. Luis L. León (Agriculture and Development), General and Lic. Aarón Sáenz (Foreign Affairs), President Plutarco Elías Calles, Ing. Alberto J. Pani (Finance and Public Credit), Sr. Luis N. Morones (Industry, Commerce, and Labor), Lic. Romeo Ortega (Gobernación).

Industry, Commerce, and Labor, Luis N. Morones, paraded from the stadium to the National Palace in ornate horse-drawn open carriages. Morones had kept labor satisfied with Calles during the presidential election, and Calles' obligation to CROM forces led to the labor czar's appointment to the cabinet position.

DEATH OF SAMUEL GOMPERS

Gompers, before leaving El Paso for Mexico City, was examined by a physician who warned him not to take the trip because his heart would be unable to stand it. On December 2, Gompers and other A.F.L. delegates were taken to the Floating Gardens of Xochimilco for a luncheon attended by Obregón, Calles, Morones, and other Mexican officials. The following day Gompers called to order the Fourth Congress of the P.A.F.L. meeting in Mexico City. He was re-elected president by acclamation. Morones was elected to the new honorary office of vice-president; Matthew Woll, treasurer; and Chester Wright and Canuto Vargas, English and Spanish secretaries. The following Wednesday Morones and Calles, accompanied by government and labor officials, bid farewell to Gompers at the Mexico City train station. Three days later Samuel Gompers, veteran labor leader, great admirer of Morones and CROM's staunchest American supporter died in San Antonio, Texas. President Calles and Morones immediately sent messages of condolence to the deceased's widow, and CROM suspended activities December 13 as a token of mourning.

No provision had been made in the P.A.F.L. constitution for succession in case of death, so although Morones was vice-president, he could not claim the presidency. Instead the A.F.L. executive council offered the office to William Green, the new president of the A.F.L. Morones sent him a congratulatory telegram in December, 1924.⁸

ZENITH OF P.L.M.

Calles announced that he had made no campaign promise to any party; he had only "accepted the support" of those organizations whose platforms coincided with his political principles when he claimed his presidency,⁹ but with Calles in the presidential chair, the Labor Party reached the apex of its power. Morones was not the only CROM leader to receive a high government post. Eduardo Moneda, CROM secretary general took over the Government Printing Shops, José López C6rtes became head of the Mexico City council, and Celestino Gasca continued as Governor of the Federal District. Calles also named Laborites to embassies: Carlos Gracidas, Argentina; Juan Fonseca, France; Eulalio Mart6nez, Hungary; and Ezequiel Salcedo, Germany. With the president's "decisive aid," de la Pe6a and Vicente Lombardo Toledano became interim governors

⁸R. Lee Guard to Morones, William Green Letterbooks, December 24, 1924; Green to Morones, William Green Letterbooks, January 9, 1925. On the first anniversary of Gompers' death, Morones praised Gompers' part in getting Pershing's troops withdrawn, and added, "Gompers' death was the motive of mourning, not only for North American workers but for all wage earners of the world." "El primer aniversario de la muerte de Samuel Gompers," C.R.O.M., January 1, 1926, 59.

⁹New York Times, November 30, 1924.

governors in Querétaro and Puebla.

One of the aspects of the CROM's multiple action program was its success in elections. Cromistas were elected to the 31st Legislature and served from December, 1924 to July, 1928.¹⁰ Morones had earlier served as Federal Deputy from Tacubaya, but did little noteworthy.

The P.L.M. and cromistas were thoroughly entrenched in the federal administration, and the zenith of their power came in 1927 when they had 1 of the 7 cabinet members, 11 of the 48 senators, 40 of the 272 deputies in the national chambers, 2 of the 29 state governors, and controlled the municipal government of Mexico City and a number of surrounding towns in the State of Mexico.¹¹ Of the three constitutional governors who were out-and-out cromistas, Rodríguez of Hidalgo was an excellent governor, Fernando Rodarte of Zacatecas was above average, and Elizalde of Aguascalientes was below par.¹²

The strength of the P.L.M. was in its control of the City and State of Mexico, which were not only the political and strategic center of the country but contained a large part of its urban population. Another advantage was the division of CROM opponents -- parties, blocs, and political conglomerations dissolved and reformed

¹⁰Treviño, El movimiento obrero en México, 22; Treviño, El espionaje comunista, 166.

¹¹Stuart Chase and Marian Tyler, Mexico: a study of two Americas (New York, 1935), 243; Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage, 360.

¹²Frank Tannenbaum, Peace by Revolution: an Interpretation of Mexico (New York, 1933), 247; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 273.

from year to year so that no other single party had CROM's continuity, discipline, or cohesiveness. In addition, Laborites resorted to election trickery typical of Mexico; ballots were stuffed, voters bribed or intimidated, and decisions often decided before the polls opened.

MORONES' POWER

During the duumvirate period, 1924-28, CROM was strongly entrenched in the federal administration, and organized labor supported Calles with votes, political pressure, and manpower for police and military operations whenever necessary; the government furnished CROM with buildings, money, and favorable treatment.

Morones served as head of CROM, Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, the cabinet minister closest to Calles, the president's confidential advisor, and P.A.F.L. vice-president. One historian says that Morones enjoyed: "absolute liberty to determine the worker policy of the government, and always counted on the unlimited aid of Calles, and Calles knew that in case of national emergency he could count on the organized force of the CROM."¹³ Buttressed by the courts, army, and the police, Morones became the virtually unchecked master of Mexican Labor. A ruthless

¹³George S. Wise, El México de Alemán (México, D.F., 1952), 39. Hudson Strode opines that Morones was the chief dynamo in the labor movement for sixteen years. Timeless Mexico (New York, 1944), 287. If one applies Strode's statement to the years, 1918-35, (the CROM's founding to the eve of the creation of the Confederación de Trabajadores de México), there is some validity in his assertion.

man, Morones augmented his power through threats, coercion, and strong-arm methods. According to one American student of Latin-American history: "Any businessman, shop manager, or factory owner who challenged his power was promptly subjected to a strike, the closing of his plant, interminable delays before official boards of arbitration, and bankruptcy -- unless he reached understanding with Morones."¹⁴

Another comment on Morones' was allegedly given by Alberto Pani, Minister of Finance and Public Credit. The dialogue was supplied to Ambassador James Sheffield and the American Embassy in Mexico City by one of the Ambassador's often-mentioned "secret reliable informants." According to this dubious source, Pani, walking with an "unnamed friend" confided: "I am entirely alone in the Cabinet. No one aids me in any way. There is a Mafia of Tejeda, Morones, León, against me and everything I do or advise."¹⁵ Speaking of revoking the Tramways Company's permit to lower fares, Pani continued: "I and Communications were for it, and the matter was settled, but Morones interfered and the agreement was cancelled."¹⁶

Pani, a hold-over from the Obregón administration, served ably in his office until he was forced out of Calles' cabinet as a result of mounting rivalry with Morones. He had never been sympathetic to

¹⁴Herring, A History of Latin America, 353.

¹⁵U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, Sheffield to Kellogg, January 5, 1927, 711.12/856. Colonel Adalberto Tejeda was Minister of Communications and Public Works; Luis León, Minister of Agriculture and Development.

¹⁶Ibid.

the activities of organized labor, least of all that element connected with Morones. According to Pani, Calles wished to keep him in his cabinet, but Pani refused to continue because Morones formed the pillar of the government and Pani was powerless. Morones almost had a free hand and the withdrawal of two cabinet ministers, Pani and Valenzuela, was due in part to Morones' hostility.

An incident in 1925, while resulting in no permanent benefits for labor, illustrates the Mexican president's support of Morones. Workers in the various phases of the petroleum industry had remained fairly free of government and union control. This was partly due to the political power of that industry and partly to the companies' ability to hire their own private militia. Calles sought to assist Morones in his effort to control oil field labor, a turbulent element, and at the same time to assert the government's power over this industry. On this occasion he sent federal troops to close bordels, saloons, and gambling houses which flourished in Veracruz because of the lucrative petroleum industry.¹⁷

MORONES' STRIKE POLICY

It was a source of pride to CROM that strikes during Morones' tenure as Minister of Labor diminished both in intensity and number from 125 in 1924 to 15 in 1927. A key factor in understanding this decrease is that Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution specified that differences or disputes between capital and labor must be submitted

¹⁷El Universal, February 15, 1925.

to boards of conciliation or arbitration. The boards based their decisions upon definitions of "lawfulness" as set forth in sections 18 and 19 of Article 123. According to Article 123, a strike was legal unless the strikers had broken a contract or committed wanton violence. Here one notices a great difference between the ideal of the law and the reality of practice. CROM strikes were announced legal and employers were forced to compensate striking cromistas. Morones branded strikes called by independent or rival federations illegal; CROM strikebreakers would then take possession of the factory and display the red and black CROM banner; government troops would protect them from scabbing.¹⁸

By 1924 the Supreme Court, no doubt influenced by the storm of protest emanating from labor sources, reversed its decision and gave the boards much power at a time when such a condition was especially favorable to the working classes. There is little doubt that Morones' influence was behind the move to bring about such a change.

To declare a strike legal was tantamount to granting the laborers their demands; to declare the strike illegal meant the workingmen lost their contract if they persisted in the strike.

¹⁸Parkes, A History of Mexico, 375. Retinger's 1926 statement: "The C.R.O.M. is bound by its statutes and its now eight years of tradition to go deeply into labour trouble and advise impartially on the individual case, in questions of strikes and labour struggles," is more propaganda meant to acquaint an English-reading audience with Morones and his labor movement than it is concrete fact. Morones was not "impartial" in his decisions. Morones of Mexico, 28.

These boards consisted of equal numbers of workmen and employers plus a government representative; but the deciding vote, especially in all important conflicts, belonged to this latter person. Morones, who was this emissary, thus had the key ballot and held unlimited sway.

Morones was eager to control railway workers who antedated CROM and were jealous of their own autonomy. Several big strikes, especially on the railways, were called without governmental authority. In the early part of 1925, Calles began to intervene when all efforts at settling the difficulties failed. He federalized the railroad service, declared illegal a strike called by the Tampico Federation of Labor Unions because it arose out of differences between the unions themselves, and prevented a general strike.

In 1926, when a strike occurred in southern Mexico on the small Isthmus Railway, it appeared that the opportunity Morones had been waiting for, had come. This strike had been declared primarily to bring about the discharge of an employee who belonged to CROM which had little strength in that district. Morones immediately declared the strike illegal and ruthlessly crushed it, because it was directed at CROM unions and not at the railway company. The strikers declared, however, that their action became inter-union, and subject to Secretary Morones' intervention only when CROM furnished strikebreakers. In a public statement printed on the front page of a large capital daily newspaper, Morones gave this explanation of his decision:

Four principles guide the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labor in reaching his decisions: to sustain liberty of association, so that any worker might join or leave a union at will; to avoid anything that weakens labor organizations, whether they are friends or enemies; to ensure that labor contracts, although made by the majority, covered the minority as well; and to make certain that a few so-called leaders did not impose their own will on the remainder of their fellow-workers.¹⁹

One of the bitterest contests that had been waged until that time between organized labor and capital in Mexico developed in May, 1925, when the Union of Bank Clerks endeavored through the solicited aid of CROM to secure demands that had been made in all Mexican banks. A crisis in the dispute was reached on May 15, when the union requested CROM support in its fight for demands which, if accepted, would have transferred control of the banks from the owners to the union. Morones, however, refused to support the bank employees on the ground that the granting of their demands would precipitate the closing of the banks, which in turn would cause a business collapse. As a result of Morones' failure to endorse the measure, the Union of Bank Clerks was compelled to retract its demands.²⁰

In a speech in Mexico City on September 26, 1925, Morones

¹⁹El Universal, July 21, 1926. The American Chargé d' Affaires in Mexico City recognized that the situation was due to Morones' ceaseless efforts to bring all the unions into one strong organization under his control. Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, Weddell to Kellogg, March 3, 1925, 812.504/610; Weddell to Kellogg, April 1, 1925, 812.504/616.

²⁰Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," Current History, XXII (July, 1926), 636.

announced his ministry's philosophy which was "based on the cooperation of all those who loyally are interested in the evolution of our country." Mexican labor, he declared, was organized both for the improvement of the Mexican worker and for the development of the country; therefore, cooperation between labor and capital was highly desirable. He continued, stating that if foreign capital adopted "appropriate" attitudes toward Mexico, it would have no need to fear organized labor. With reference to the alleged apprehension of foreign capital because of numerous Mexican strikes, the Minister vaguely answered:

If foreign capital comes to Mexico with a spirit of cooperation and in harmony with the needs of the laboring classes here, such capital need not fear that organized labor in Mexico will place any obstacles before it.²¹

MORONES AND THE JUDICIARY

Morones' CROM at times mobilized its strength against the judiciary and caused the removal of magistrates whose attitudes it disliked. The reality that the executive rather than the judiciary or legislative branches was pre-eminent often led to direct intervention by the federal government in the affairs of the judiciary.

²¹Ibid., "Labor Disputes and Agrarian Excesses in Mexico," XXIII (November, 1925), 258. See Morones' June 19, 1925 address to the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico City for a similar statement. American Federationist, August, 1925, 636-637.

According to Laborites, Judge Ricardo Couto was granting amparos²² to employers against the labor boards until his anti-labor bias became scandalous. CROM organized a protest against this official, threatening a general strike unless he were removed, and he was removed to Michoacán.²³ The Supreme Court yielded to CROM's power and Morones' pressure. The fact that with such attention focused on the jurist he was merely transferred instead of impeached may prove his innocence of the allegations.

The employment of similar duress compelled the resignation of Judge Miguel Mendoza López y Schwertfeger, Federal Judge of Tuxpan, Veracruz. On May 20, 1927, he presented his resignation to the Supreme Court, charging constant and intolerable pressures against him by Minister Morones. These charges were printed in the Tampico El Mundo but did not appear in the capitoline press because of CROM censorship. López's protests involved the Minister's relations with oil concessionaires, and the judge's issuing writs

²²A recurso de amparo is a writ calling for a stay of government action. It combines the characteristics of habeas corpus, mandamus, and certiorari and provides judicial protection against damage to individual interests or violation of constitutional guarantees. Amparo, an interesting innovation in Hispanic law, is broader than habeas corpus since it protects men not only against illegal arrest but against violation of any human rights. See Carlos Sánchez Mejorada, "The Writ of Amparo: Mexican Procedure to Protect Human Rights," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 243 (January, 1946), 107-111 for a concise explanation by a Mexican corporation lawyer and one-time president of the Mexican Bar Association.

²³Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage, 510-511.

of amparo to protect claimants against Morones.²⁴

Morones was not omnipotent. The conflict that occurred in Tamaulipas between Governor Emilio Portes Gil and Morones, and in Jalisco between Governor José Zuno and Morones when these two administrators struggled against Morones' ambition to control labor groups in their states, exemplify the situations that prevailed during the period Morones' CROM exerted its maximum power.²⁵ In certain states the political party in control, often hostile to CROM, created an independent federation of workers, who, in return for administrative and judicial backing, were expected to back it. This situation prevailed in Jalisco from 1923 to 1926 under the governorship of Zuno, a leader who knew how to resist Morones' assault. Moronistas in his state were weak and Zuno's candidates were popular in their districts. Zuno refused to be coerced, openly rejected Morones' fiat of authority, and threw moronistas out of a building for which they had paid no rent for a year.²⁶ This strong-minded governor spent much time delivering anti-CROM and anti-Morones speeches to laborers and agrarians.

²⁴On its front page El Mundo (Tampico), June 9, 1927, stated that the resignation of the magistrate, who had served an eight month tenure, "has been profoundly lamented by all social classes." Gruening, a contemporary observer, describes López as "notable for his probity, his intellectual honesty, and his long devoted record in the revolutionary ranks." Mexico and its Heritage, 511.

²⁵Tannenbaum, Peace by Revolution, 249; Alfonso Romandía Ferreira in El Universal, September 21, 1956.

²⁶José Guadalupe Zuno, Remiscencias de una vida (Guadalajara, 1956), 149. In 1957, Morones defended Calles' memory against Zuno's attacks. Morones emphasized the fact that Zuno took advantage of Calles because the ex-president, who had died in California in October, 1945, could no longer defend himself. Morones erroneously claimed that "Calles has a solid prestige, even in death that can quiet his distractors." Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 4, 1956.

TEXTILE CONVENTION OF 1925-26

The record of labor legislation and progress under the Calles-Morones regime deserves examination in detail. Perhaps Morones' most constructive act as Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor was his calling of a textile convention in October, 1925. This particular industry suffered from almost continuous industrial unrest and labor strife. It was to be the first of such conferences which the government intended to convoke in the interest of industrial peace. In this convention employers and employees entered into a collective contract or agreement concerning the textile industry. Textiles, the nation's leading industry, at this time was a depressed industry, characterized by overproduction, outworn and outmoded machinery, unemployment, ruinous competition, and unstable prices. The length of the working day and labor contracts, and the respective responsibility of employers and employees were the first subjects discussed by the mixed committees. Other subjects on the agenda were workers' education, compensation for lost time, health, social welfare, industrial accidents, lockouts, and strikes.²⁷

Before the convention ended in December, 1926, the textile agreement of 1912 was revised, quotas of production and prices were adjusted, hours, wages and working conditions were agreed to as well as were reduced working schedules, unions were given representatives in the management of the industry, obligations of the two parties

²⁷Bulletin of the Pan American Union, January, 1926, 93-94.

were defined and penalties instituted for their breach, wages were set at 1.65 pesos to 2 pesos a day for unskilled labor, and 2 to 2.20 pesos for slightly skilled labor. The Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor took upon himself the enforcement of this contract.²⁸ While this was only a partial solution of the textile problem, conditions were better than those which previously prevailed, and for the first time a reasonable degree of order was introduced.

CROM GROWTH

The position of political influence gained by CROM caused that body to become autocratic and arbitrary in its attitude toward labor organizations not affiliated with it. Special inducements, such as wage increases and better working conditions, were offered to those unions willing to join CROM. If their leadership refused, gangster tactics forced the reluctant to reconsider. A less publicized, but much dreaded CROM organ was the palanca, "lever" or "crowbar." This branch was composed of Morones' specially selected goons who worked over unpurchasable competitors or persistent foes such as Senator Francisco Field Jurado. As a result, when it became apparent to unions unaffiliated with CROM

²⁸El Universal, September 10, 1927; March 30, 1929. An executive resolution of March 15, 1927, required that all disputes arising between employers and employees in the textile industry be submitted to Morones' Ministry. It was an effort to prevent local authorities mediating in disputes from which confusion would result.

that they were courting disaster, many unwillingly entered as a realistic means of self-preservation.

Coercion and CROM's deliberate overestimates of its membership explain the organization's phenomenal growth during the Calles period. Just as it is impossible to obtain accurate figures on CROM membership under Obregón, the same meaningless maze of numbers characterizes Calles' regime. CROM claimed 1,500,000 in 1925 and 2,000,000 in 1926.²⁹ A CROM document gives the 1927 membership as 1,862,870.³⁰ Figures given by CROM sources for 1928-30 and 1932

²⁹C.R.C.M. Memoria, 1924-1926, 19-21; Poblete Troncoso, El movimiento obrero latinoamericano, also cites 1,500,000 for 1925. The American Labor Yearbook, 1926, p. 37 cites 800,000 for 1925. Gruening's Mexico and its Heritage, without citing a specific source except "The C.R.O.M. declares its growth to be," gives 2,000,000 for 1926. The August 2, 1926 New York Times stated CROM claimed 1,500,000 members in 1926. Thomas McEnelly, American Consul at Chihuahua, described one example of Morones' palanca. On November 25, 1925, two individuals named Lázaro Canales and Eduardo Moreno appeared at the office of the Confederación de Obreros y Campesinos and informed the secretary of that organization they had been commissioned by CROM "to receive the furniture and archives." They were told by the secretary that his organization had no connection with CROM and would not comply with their demand. The two called twelve men to their assistance who promptly threw the secretary into the street, took possession of the archives, and locked the building's doors. Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, McEnelly to Secretary of State, December 5, 1925, 812.504/746.

³⁰CROM expediente 0/141(000)/8 cited in Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 65; a United States diplomatic dispatch also gives membership as 1,800,000. U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, January 13, 1927, 711.12/855. Samuel Yúdice, speaking at the Trades Union Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland, claimed 2,000,000. The Times (London), September 8, 1927. The Bulletin of the Pan American Union stated "over 2,000,000," November, 1927, 1151. Alfonso López Aparecio, El movimiento obrero de México, gives the figure as 2,250,000; cited in Albert Louis Michaels, "Mexican Politics and Nationalism from Calles to Cárdenas" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1966), 23.

are the following: 1928, 2,000,000;³¹ 1929, 1,800,000;³² 1930, 1,500,000;³³ and 1932, 1,000,000.³⁴

Every group which could organize did so and CROM assumed a motley appearance. Under the guidance of Morones, mining, petroleum, textile, tobacco, fiber, steel, shoe manufacturing, and brewing industries were organized, to name only a few. Soft drink workers, writers, actors, gravediggers, bullfighters, domestic servants, fruit vendors, government employees, department-store workers, newsboys, lottery ticket sellers, and Mexico City prostitutes constituted some of the federation's organized unions. Despite this last named union, which was patterned after a similar one in Puebla that petitioned for CROM membership, the number of female cromista affiliates was minimal and insignificant. In Sonora, a Union and League of Resistance of Fiancées was formed to encourage matrimony and prevent "superficial affairs" among its members. This unique organization was rejected by CROM.³⁵

Ironically, CROM never had much strength among the electricians, despite the fact that this had been Morones' earlier trade. In 1916 they almost severed relations with Morones when he, while acting as

³¹Statement by unnamed CROM officials in Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 65.

³²C.R.O.M., September 1, 1929.

³³Ibid., August 1, 1930.

³⁴Statement by unspecified CROM leaders in Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 65.

³⁵Ibid., 108.

manager of the Mexican Telephone Company, aligned against them. After Morones' use of federal troops to prevent one of their strikes in Veracruz, the electricians considered him a traitor to their cause and organization, but did not break relations with him since they feared his power.³⁶

CROM'S AGRARIAN PROGRAM

The difference between country and city created a divergence between rural and urban labor making it difficult to unite them for purposes of political action or governmental regulation, yet CROM had a large agricultural membership. CROM regarded peasants as agricultural laborers, a branch of the labor movement, rather than as small landowners and attempted to unionize the agrarian elements as the following data of the 1926 composition of CROM unions illustrates: regional and state federations of agricultural communities and laborers, 50; regional and state federations of city workers, 35; workers' organizations in the Federal District, 108; city unions in entire Mexico, 1,328; and agrarian communities and laborers' unions, 2,063.³⁷

The CROM constitution declared that the economic problem, where it concerns the campesino, could not be solved until a

³⁶See Mark Elliot Thompson, "The Development of Unionism Among Mexican Electrical Workers" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1966), for a detailed monograph on one aspect of organized Mexican labor.

³⁷Frank Tannenbaum, The Mexican Agrarian Revolution (New York, 1929), 412.

"decentralization" in the ownership of the soil and a more equitable distribution of the same were achieved. While demanding the continuation of the division of hacendados' land among the peasantry as provided by the Mexican Constitution so that campesinos may be largely self-employed, Morones insisted that tools, farm animals, and agricultural knowledge were as significant as land, and essential accompaniments to land distribution if agrarian reform were to succeed. These land distributions, CROM leadership believed, would prove wasteful and ineffective among a population of untrained and pauperized ex-serfs.³⁸

To this end, the Banco Cooperativo Agrícola was founded in May, 1926, to extend credits to help cover the cost of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, machinery, livestock, and farm buildings. Operations began with a deposit of 10,000 pesos made by the CROM central committee; and a federal government five-year loan of 100,000 pesos. CROM sold shares to cooperative agricultural societies as quickly as they could organize.³⁹ In addition to forming workers' cooperatives and the Agrarian Bank, CROM attempted to upgrade campesinos by establishing sanitary commissions and rural schools.

³⁸ William English Walling, The Mexican Question: Mexico and American-Mexican Relations under Calles and Obregon (New York, 1927), 83.

³⁹ Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 10, 1956; Mildred Maroney, "Organized Labor in Mexico: a History and Delineation," (unpublished Master's thesis, The American University, 1928), 86-87.

Morones also prompted the traditional manual occupations among Mexicans who had access to other sources of employment. Among these vocations were: pottery making, basket making, vegetable-fiber products, such as hats and sacks, footwear and clothing; furniture; lace and needle-work; sarapes and rebozos, and similar commodities to promote handicrafts.

CROM'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The Calles administration made considerable progress in education because of the public school system which José Vasconcelos founded during Obregón's term. At the third CROM convention in Orizaba in 1921, Vicente Lombardo Toldedano became president of CROM's committee of education, a task which Morones considered a mere diversion that would keep the workers emotionally satisfied while Grupo Acción leaders proceeded to use their positions to amass their personal fortunes. Lombardo, however, took his task as educator and legal advisor seriously making hundreds of speeches throughout Mexico to help supplement Calles' education program. Lombardo's duties were to give legal advice to members in conflicts with employers and to educate workers in labor law, union rights, labor history, Mexican and world history, science, culture; in short, "anything that would increase the general knowledge and class consciousness of the workers."⁴⁰

⁴⁰Robert Paul Millon, Vicente Lombardo Toledano: Mexican Marxist (Chapel Hill, 1966), 15-16. He became a university professor specializing in labor law. From the university he entered politics and succeeded in becoming governor of Puebla, and then congressman and senator.

At the request of the 1923 CROM convention in Guadalajara, the committee of education submitted a set of conclusions to the 1924 CROM national convention meeting in Ciudad Juárez. The following is a summary of the salient points: 1. civilization cannot spread in Mexico as long as the language is not uniform, 2. the Indian must be civilized and at the same time his admirable innate qualities must be developed, 3. teachers must be trained in the principles, views of life, and traditions which prevail in Mexico, 4. specialization in the teaching profession is desirable, 5. the type of education most immediately needed in Mexico is technical training, 6. higher education must cease to be monopolized by one class.⁴¹ At this convention CROM adopted a platform urging the spread of education, particularly vocational and technical training.

Not only did CROM construct schools for workers' children and supply them with books, libraries, instructors and medical examiners, but passed numerous resolutions designed to improve the social, educational, and moral conditions of the Mexican laboring class at its 1926 and 1927 annual congresses.⁴² The

⁴¹See the bilingual pamphlet (English-Spanish) publication: Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana, Comité de Educación, El problema de la educación en México. Puntos de vista y proposiciones del Comité de Educación de la C.R.O.M., presentados por el Presidente del Comité Vicente Lombardo ante la 6a. Convención de la Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana, celebrada en Ciudad Juárez, Chih., en el mes de noviembre de 1924 (México, D.F., 1924), passim.

⁴²In April, 1925, CROM opened a school whose courses were those of the official schools at the primary, grammar, and higher grade levels; 248 pupils enrolled in the six primary grades. Bulletin of the Pan American Union, July, 1925, 744.

central committee voted to organize a Mexican Labor College (1) for the "further instruction and training of members of labor unions who have distinguished themselves by their zeal in the labor cause," and (2) to promote vocational training.⁴³ The central committee also called a national teachers' congress in 1926, and this resulted in the formation of the National Federation of Teachers.

MORONES AND GRAFT

Deeply rooted in Mexican as well as Latin American consciousness is the idea that the government is legitimate prey to those fortunate enough to have the opportunity to be in office. At first, CROM leaders espoused a program of practical trade unionism combined with what they termed "revolutionary socialism." Though Morones called himself a socialist and made speeches proclaiming his comradeship with the Chicago Haymarket Square victims, he began to demonstrate that the principles of socialism were compatible with a policy of cooperation between workers and capitalists. He built up an extensive patronage and bribery machine which collected huge sums of money. The taking of a percentage of government employees' salaries, payment of union dues, contributions to the Labor Party chest, blackmail extorted from capitalists to avoid strikes, and funds obtained from

⁴³Ibid., July, 1926, 729; November, 1927, 1151; American Labor Yearbook, 1927, 221.

labor disputes amounted to millions of pesos.⁴⁴ Morones, Gasca, and Moneda are popularly credited with having amassed huge fortunes, while other Grupo Acción members are supposed to have fared well, but less spectacularly.

Alfonso Romandía Ferreira, one of Morones' persistent critics, tried to find out what had happened to the money collected in 1928 by CROM leaders for an airplane flight around the world.⁴⁵ The CROM central committee had agreed to organize a transatlantic flight to better relations between the Mexican, European, American, and Latin American proletariats. By July 1, 1928, Morones had donated 2,500

⁴⁴A quota of two centavos per week was supposed to be paid by each member of the CROM, but this did not work in practice. When CROM claimed a membership of 1½ million, approximately 13,000 paid union dues. The Grupo Acción, which had no official status in the CROM constitution, paid the lion's share of the total income. Figures for 1924 and 1925 show that this select group paid 50%-75%: of 92,000 pesos collected in the former year the Grupo Acción paid 78,000; it paid 40,000 pesos of 74,000 in 1925. These figures are cited in Walling, The Mexican Question, 100, who gives no source for his data. Since many Grupo members were either government officials or Labor Party members of the Senate or Chamber of Deputies, their large donations to CROM's treasury became one of the chief bases of the accusations that graft was rife in the Grupo; the national treasury was available. José Petricioli denied that all government employees were forced to contribute to CROM during Calles' administration: "Nor is it true that the CROM received any direct grant from the government of the time. It did not need it. And in fact, it has never received such a grant." Robert J. Alexander interview of José Petricioli, Mexico City, August 27, 1948, photocopy, L.S.U. Archives.

⁴⁵Licenciado Romandía also questions what happened to the funds to start a CROM bank. El Universal, September 22, 1956. Morones' answer to this antagonist was that CROM treasurer Fernando Rodarte informed the tenth CROM convention that the transatlantic flight had been cancelled because only 8000 pesos had been collected. He failed, however, to mention what happened to that sum or funds for the bank. Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 9, 1956.

pesos; more than anyone else listed in the organizational committee report. The itinerary of the airplane "C.R.O.M." was to be Mexico City to Europe via Washington, D.C. The grandiose scheme called for stops in Africa, Central America, South America, and the United States, but the trip never materialized and the donations disappeared.

Instead of aiding the laboring masses more, the members of Grupo Acción dominated the union for their own ends and used the organization as a means to fulfill their ambitions and enrich themselves.⁴⁶ They built country houses and travelled in expensive automobiles, but the shiniest and most costly car of all was the bullet-proof Cadillac belonging to Morones. With the wealth he pilfered, he brought estates, apartment houses, hotels, and blatantly exhibited his newly-acquired diamond rings, tie-pins, and stylish clothing.⁴⁷

Morones openly insulted the misery of the national proletariat with the flamboyance and ostentation of his costly diamonds. This display had the psychological effect of revealing his lack of a paternalistic concern for the lean-bellied men who came from dirt-floor shacks to march barefooted in his demonstrations. Beals

⁴⁶ Miguel Gil in La Prensa, January 28, 29, 1938; Emilio Portes Gil, interview, Mexico City, July 26, 1968; Agustín Zapata Casasola, interview, Mexico City, July 16, 1968; Lieuwin, Mexican Militarism, 92; Lesley Byrd Simpson, Many Mexicos (4th ed. rev.; Berkeley, 1967), 309-311; Alfonso Romandía Ferreira in El Universal, September 22, 1956; Millon, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, 15; Parkes, A History of Mexico, 383; Stokes, Latin American Politics, 240.

⁴⁷ Morones' Mancera Hotel was one of Mexico City's finest during this period. His real estate alone was estimated at 1,300,000 pesos. Many of these properties were not held in his own name; to avoid suspicion he had friends register as the owners. See El Universal, December 19, 1935 for an enumeration of Morones' alleged real estate.

described Morones as "a big, pig-like man, he was always meticulously dressed and perfumed, his hands glittering with diamonds."⁴⁸ Morones exclaimed that he wore diamonds "to show those bastard bourgeois that we can wear diamonds too."⁴⁹

One evidence of Morones' corruption and graft was his hacienda in Tlalpan, and the many drinking and gambling parties he held there. This retreat included a steel-girded frontón court, swimming pool, bowling alley, tennis court, gardens, orchards, fountains, turkish steam baths with massage rooms, and three dwellings for the retinue of fifty servants and chauffeurs.⁵⁰ Miguel Gil accused Morones of taking money for his Tlalpan estate from the municipal treasury and

⁴⁸Beals, Glass Houses, 58. Describing Morones' penchant for perfume, one observer commented that the labor leader "took his baths, reportedly and as far as could be judged superficially, in eau de cologne." Frank L. Kluckhohn, The Mexican Challenge (New York, 1939), 230.

⁴⁹Strode, Timeless Mexico, 288. Morones explained to critics that he was keeping the diamonds as a reserve fund which the working class could use in time of need. Parkes, A History of Mexico, 383. For additional comments on Morones' display of diamonds see the following: El Popular, April 6, 1964; Rosendo Salazar, Historia de las luchas proletarias de México, 1923 a 1936 (2 vols.; Mexico, D.F., 1938), I, 36-37, 89; Araiza, Historia del movimiento obrero mexicano, IV, 115; Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage, 390; Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 145; Padgett, The Mexican Political System, 30.

⁵⁰Miguel Gil in La Prensa, January 31, February 1, 1938. Rafael López Malo even alleges that Morones held bullfights there. El Popular, July 21, 1945. Although the idea is not impossible, it seems farfetched. Statements such as these must be taken carefully -- Carleton Beals, a visitor to Morones' finca, stated Morones was very discreet about his mistresses, and that he remembered neither frontón courts nor turkish baths on Morones' estate. Interview, Baton Rouge, April 12, 13, 1970.

of using trucks and machines from the Department of Public Works to build roads there. When asked about the lavishly decorated and ornate home, Luis Enrique Morones Peña responded that land was cheap in the 1920's and that his father had bought the estate "little by little in order to have a few friends over for some drinks."⁵¹ One observer said this "pleasure pit" was a Sodom and Gomorra" where guests could release their inhibitions.⁵² Another said that chastity was not the most conspicuous of Morones' moral virtues, and that the rake ruled Tlalpan with the abandon of a "latter-day Nero."⁵³ This "cesspool of vice and corruption" attracted groups of Morones' thrill-seeking friends. Miguel Gil writes that Morones brought numerous politicians, military men, and others of less importance there to attend his orgies with attractive prostitutes.⁵⁴

Concerning Morones' moral behavior during this period, his secretary Petricioli remarked that Morones "was a man of great virtue." In explaining Morones' alleged corruption to an American scholar, Petricioli injected part of his own philosophy of life when he said:

⁵¹Interview, Mexico City, August 24, 1968.

⁵²Araiza, Historia del movimiento obrero mexicano, IV, 138.

⁵³J. H. Plenn, Mexico Marches (Indianapolis, 1939), 267.

⁵⁴They "took all the badness and vices from Morones who prostituted men, women, and the ideal of the C.R.O.M." Miguel Gil in La Prensa, January 29, 1938. Gruening asserts Morones indulged in the "orgies of an Oriental satrap." Gruening, "Emerging Mexico," 28-32.

And Morones naturally liked the women, liked good food and liked a good drink. Indeed, without fine women, good food and a good drink, life would not really be worth living, would it? And so thought Morones, and it is undoubtedly true that he had his share of all of these. However, his enemies liked to exaggerate all of this, and to make it much worse than it was, and to say that Morones was thus wasting the money of the workers. The last is not true, he never exploited the workers for his own good. There were terrifically great opportunities available in those days, and he would have been a saint had he not taken advantage of some of them. And if he stole a bit to give it to the labor movement, was that so bad?⁵⁵

Thus with a "wine, women, and song" attitude, Petricioli rationalized and dismissed his boss's actions. Petricioli's last statement is false. Morones took from the rich, but did not share with the poor.

Corruption and graft in Mexican politics neither began nor ended with Morones. He carried to an extreme a long-entertained notion in Latin-American political life: the possession of political power is a concession and the concessionaire manages as large a return or "honest graft" as possible. There are too many charges of Morones' graft for them to be lightly dismissed. He had an unprecedented opportunity to enrich himself and had more to confiscate than did his detractors; not that they necessarily would have refrained from enriching themselves had they had the chance. Morones was the head of a syndicate and political party receiving hundreds of thousands of pesos during an era when there was little

⁵⁵Robert J. Alexander interview of José Petricioli, Mexico City, August 27, 1948, photocopy, L.S.U. Archives.

or no bookkeeping. It was a temptation and he and other succumbed.⁵⁶

It is interesting to note that in May and June, 1964 when some of Morones' possessions were auctioned, a journalist commented that "its almost like opening Pandora's box."⁵⁷ In May, 1964, items mainly of his historical value" were sold: these included rifles, desks, ceramics and various other commodities, many of which sold for more than 1000 pesos each. On June 5, 104 paintings of the European Academy School of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were auctioned in the Morones family home in Tacubaya, "La Madona y el Niño" brought 5,500 pesos, a small part of the 200,000 pesos received for the paintings alone.⁵⁸

A contemporary pun in the 1920's stated that the initials "C.R.O.M.," instead of meaning Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana, meant "Como Roba Oro Morones" (How Morones Steals Money.)⁵⁹ When José Petricioli was asked about the veracity of the numerous claims of Morones' corruption, he nonchalantly offered a slightly different version of the "saint theory" he had given Professor Robert J. Alexander twenty years earlier: "What do you expect?

⁵⁶ According to Morones' widow, her spouse did not pilfer CROM's treasury. When queried about his enormous income, she stated he "earned a lot" as chief of the telephone company and Military Manufacturing Establishments, but failed to specify any exact amount. Interview, Mexico City, August 3, 1968.

⁵⁷ El Excélsior, May 17, 1964.

⁵⁸ Ibid., June 5, 7, 1964.

⁵⁹ John Gunther, Inside Latin America (New York, 1941), 89.

After all labor unions in Mexico are not founded by monks and saints."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Author's interview, Mexico City, June 25, 1968. Naturally Morones denied the charges of graft and claimed "the capital I have is mine and not because I have stolen it." "La comisión de la C.R.O.M. que encabeza el compañero Luis N. Morones llegó a la Ciudad de México, después de un resonado triunfo," C.R.O.M., September 15, 1932, 47. In the winter of 1954, Morones wrote the following statement for the introduction of Petricioli's El compañero Morones: "Aseguro enfáticamente contra todo lo dicho que no la he defraudado ni la defraudaré." Morones was not the only cabinet member to amass a fortune. General Joaquín Amaro, Minister of War, had palatial residences in the capital, landed estates in the countryside, and the finest stable of polo ponies in Mexico.

CHAPTER VI

THE PETROLEUM CONTROVERSY

The Mexican oil question (1925-28), although constituting one phase of Morones' influence, was in itself an important matter prominently in the foreground for several years. There followed vigorous note-writing between the United States and Mexican governments during which the bitterness and intransigency of both parties made the situation more tense. This voluminous correspondence and the subsequent proceedings are an excellent source for Morones' key role in the controversy.

During the colonial period, the deposits of precious metals in the Spanish Empire belonged exclusively to the Castilian monarch. Charles III's mining code for New Spain, Reales Ordenanzas of 1783, remained in force until 1884 when the Mexican Congress passed the first mining code which gave up the nation's heritage from Spain; that is, Mexico's subsoil wealth. These regulations declared deposits of mineral fuels and bitumens, including petroleum, to be exclusive property of owners of the surface. Such grants were in perpetuity, subject only to the payment of a tax or rental. The law exemplified a guiding principle of the Díaz era, namely development by means of foreign capital.

The statute of 1884 with some amendments remained in force until 1892, when the Mexican Congress promulgated a second general mining code. It reaffirmed that the owner of the surface could freely exploit the petroleum below his land. This legislation was

in turn superseded in 1909 when an enactment again declared petroleum deposits to be the exclusive property of the surface owner.

The code of 1909, with some modification, principally revolutionary decrees, was still on the statute books when the Constitution of 1917 appeared. Article 27 of this new constitution declared the absolute and full ownership of all sub-soil deposits to be vested in the nation. It redefined private property by placing limitations not recognized in Anglo-American common law: "social utility" and "national benefit" rather than timeless, contractual principles were enumerated.

PETROLEUM LAW OF 1925

Three months after assuming his ministry Morones argued that American oil companies located within 50 kilometers of the Mexican coast were "contrary" to the 1917 Constitution. Stating that the Constitution did not specify how foreigners were to be forced to give up rights previously acquired, not did it authorize the executive to seize these properties, Morones announced that these foreigners' rights should be defined by legislative power.¹

Morones took a hard line in June, 1925, when at a luncheon given by the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico City, he declared:

Mexico has a duty to protect all foreign interests,
but she has rights as well, and if necessary, in

¹New York Times, February 1, 1925.

defense of those rights Mexico is prepared to fight to the last ditch and dig her own grave defending those rights.²

He invited foreigners to invest, but specified that they must come with "clean hands," and not with the purpose of exploiting the poor masses. He disguised his "get tough" policy by asking their confidence in the Mexican government, and by promising that his government would cooperate with foreigners whose capital and energy Mexico needed.³

In 1925, a commission composed of Congressman Jesús Solorzano, Senator Ignacio Roaarte, Engineer Joaquín Santaella of the Department of Finance, and Licenciado Manuel de la Peña of the Department of Industry, Commerce, and Labor drafted a petroleum law.⁴ It limited the possession of oil properties acquired before 1917 to a period of fifty years, and foreign owners of oil properties had until January 1, 1927 to renew their concessions under penalty of forfeiture. This law contradicted promises of "perpetual ownership" extracted from Obregón in the Bucareli Agreements which the United States maintained resembled a treaty. The Mexicans contended these had been gentlemen's agreements signed by Alvaro Obregón, and as such were not binding on Calles' administration.

²Ibid., June 20, 1925.

³Luis N. Morones in El Universal, February 17, 1954.

⁴Jesús Silva Herzog, Historia de la expropiación de los empresarios petroleros (México, D.F., 1964), 51.

The oil companies contested the new law for two reasons: first, it recognized no petroleum rights which, although acquired prior to May 1, 1917, were not before that date dedicated to extraction by the performance of certain "positive acts"; second, petroleum rights including those recognized by the decisions of the Mexican Supreme Court, must be surrendered in exchange for concessions emanating from the government.

Morones gave an exclusive statement to the Associated Press in January, 1926 after he had conferred with representatives of the oil industry. He said that the indications were favorable for a mutually agreeable decision between the oil men and the government, and he welcomed the cooperation of all companies involved. When asked by correspondents if the government would make the new law retroactive he vaguely answered, "The Mexican Government will do nothing more than comply and enforce compliance with the laws which are enacted." He continued:

The study of the regulations of the petroleum law has hardly commended. This study will afford opportunity to the Mexican Government to show clearly its broad judgment and its purpose of proceeding with absolute fairness within the principles which the law provides.⁵

An example of this "absolute fairness" came within one week. On January 21, promulgation of the so-called Alien Land Law increased ill-feeling between the Mexican and United States governments. This legislation said foreigners could not acquire real estate within

⁵New York Times, January 17, 1926.

certain prohibited zones -- 100 kilometers in width along each of Mexico's borders, and 50 kilometers in width along each of the seacoasts; and it required that every foreigner, before acquiring any real estate or mineral concessions in Mexico, waive his rights by agreeing not to invoke the protection of his government with respect to such properties.

On April 8, 1926, the petroleum legislation of December, 1925 was embodied in a series of regulations which empowered the Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor to interpret and act. Morones, therefore, became one of the central figures in the oil negotiations. The cabinet, however, was divided on the issue. Pani and Sáenz defended the American companies and wanted to avoid a crash at all costs with the oil interests.⁶ Morones, on the other hand, escalated the controversy, and refused to reach an agreement along lines which American companies considered "reasonable."

Although some smaller American companies and landowners complied with the provisions of the legislation, the more important ones refused to do so, appealing instead for United States governmental protection. Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg, backed by President Coolidge, was inclined to support them; therefore, Morones declared

⁶Luis N. Morones in El Excelsior, September 5, 1953; Luis N. Morones in Las Novedades, September 5, 1953; Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 8, 1956.

that the petroleum conflict began because of the disobedience of high officials in the oil companies.⁷

THE TANNENBAUM LUNCHEON

Luis León, Calles' Minister of Agriculture, asserts that Ambassador Sheffield was "a cloaked agent of the oil companies" who intrigued from Mexico and misinformed his superiors insulting and disgracing the Mexican government.⁸ Morones always considered Sheffield a stubborn enemy of Mexico.⁹

Sheffield found the Mexicans unattractive, and allowed his feelings to influence his diplomacy. His correspondence abounded with invidious comments and remarks about the people to whom he was accredited, and his dispatches prejudiced the State Department. His opinions of Calles and his cabinet members were colored by their morals and "irregular living habits." Sheffield's initial inability to gain the friendship and confidence of Mexican governmental officials, including Morones, was largely due to certain qualities in Sheffield's personality, character, and background.

An excellent example of Sheffield's incapacity to evaluate all persons judiciously occurred at a February, 1926 luncheon.

⁷Luis N. Morones in El Universal, December 17, 20, 1956. Morones declared that the Calles government had violated no agreements and said that since former president Obregón "wholeheartedly" supported Calles' policy, it demonstrated that the regime was fulfilling all commitments legally begun by Obregón. New York Times, January 17, 1926.

⁸Luis L. León, "El Presidente Calles," Historia Mexicana, (octubre-diciembre, 1960), 327.

⁹Luis N. Morones in El Universal, March 6, 1956.

Frank Tannenbaum had been in Mexico for six months conducting a study of Mexican agricultural conditions to be published by the Brookings Institute. Upon first meeting Sheffield, Tannenbaum, whose sympathy with the Mexican Revolution and with the Mexican people pervades his written works, observed: "It became very clear to me during our first interview, that the Ambassador was surprisingly, almost painfully isolated from contact with the Mexican government."¹⁰ On Friday, February 11 Sheffield, Counselor of the Embassy and interpreter Arthur Schoenfeld, Morones, Secretary of Education Puig Casauranc, and Luis León attended a luncheon arranged by Tannenbaum at San Angel about eight miles from Mexico City.

Sheffield broke the ice by drinking to "Viva México" and the Mexicans replied with "Viva Los Estados Unidos." As soon as they were seated, and without wasting much time in preliminaries, Sheffield took the lead by initiating the discussion. Sheffield expressed his desire to help Mexico, his deep interest in the peón's problems, and his sympathy with them. He presented the view that the peón had been greatly aided in his scale of living and educational advantages wherever foreign companies built schools and hospitals for the laborers, housed them under hygienic conditions, and raised wages from "the starvation point" of twenty-five centavos a day to two to four pesos daily; and that for the benefit of these

¹⁰ U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, Tannenbaum to Kellogg, March 5, 1926, 711.12/752.

very people which the Mexican government was pledged to help, it should welcome and protect foreign capital.

Morones disagreed with Sheffield's viewpoint that the masses had received abundant benefits from foreign capital. Sheffield wrote in his official dispatch that Morones replied in length giving from his point of view the history of foreign capital in Mexico, and charging that under the Díaz regime foreign capital depleted the wealth of the country, encouraged corruption, and insisted on privileges without recognizing its obligations. Morones asserted that the Madero and following revolutions were in part a protest against the abuses of capital, and that the Constitution of 1917 embodied the sentiment of the Mexican people concerning the aggression and wrongdoing of foreign capital. Morones bypassed Sheffield's point regarding the benefits to the masses wherever foreign capital was invested and, according to Sheffield,

took the radical view that capital practically had no privileges and only such rights as the Constitution of 1917 and laws might grant. It had come into the country to exploit its wealth and must abide by such laws as the Mexican people chose to enact.¹¹

Morones stated that Mexico did not oppose foreign capital, that the restrictions placed upon capital's freedom were irksome only because they were new, and that Mexican legislation seemed more radical because it had not had a slow, accumulative growth as in

¹¹Ibid., Sheffield to Kellogg, February 16, 1926, 711.12/685; Luis N. Morones in El Universal, March 6, 1957.

other countries. "After all," he said, "it was its suddenness rather than its nature that was responsible for the bad reputation of the Mexican legislation."¹²

After the luncheon Sheffield sent an important dispatch to the State Department. One particular passage is worth quoting at some length since it contains a perceptive appraisal of Morones:

It was evident...that Morones is the directing force behind the present Government and in my opinion the strongest man in the Cabinet; that he is politically ambitious and expects to be, what he now, in effect, is, the head of the Government; that he is able, strong and without conscience, and while he is not seeking the support of the United States, he is hopeful that by a show of willingness to treat with business interests on the one hand and to modify the extreme radical views of the chief labor organization on the other, he may prevent active opposition on the part of the United States to his ambitions and his plans.¹³

Sheffield continued by analyzing the Minister of Education as neither politically nor otherwise strong and therefore followed Morones; the sheepish Minister of Agriculture, he described, as incapable of intelligent initiative and "much afraid of Morones."

Sheffield was harsh in his condemnation of Frank Tannenbaum. The young scholar had said little at the dinner, but "had been in entire agreement" with Minister Morones:

He is far more Mexican in sympathy than he is American, a dangerous man for American

¹²U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, Tannenbaum to Kellogg, March 5, 1926, 711.12/752.

¹³Ibid., Sheffield to Kellogg, February 16, 1926, 711.12/685.

interests, apparently a believed in the personal destiny of Morones. He is a graduate of Columbia, a Phi Beta Kappa man, with a distorted view of society and government.¹⁴

The following month Sheffield wrote Kellogg that Tannenbaum was in the service of the Mexican government, though his employment was both less continuous and less remunerative than that of Ernest Gruening.¹⁵ The ambassador, refuting Tannenbaum's account regarding his aloofness and isolation from members of the Mexican government, wrote: "I need hardly point out that from the time of my first arrival here I made all proper advances to members of the Government."¹⁶ The key hinges on Sheffield's interpretation of all "proper advances."

At the Tannenbaum luncheon, Schoenfeld explained how the Americans after their revolution redeemed their bonds and established their credit in spite of the fact that the redemption led to a number of speculative abuses. Morones replied that the comparison did not hold for Mexico, that the international debt situation was one of the most important confronting the world, that in the adjustments of international debts the ability to pay was a more or less recognized and accepted consideration, that Mexico was anxious to pay its debts, and that its greatest day of national happiness would be the day when it could pay its debts.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., March 26, 1926, 711.12/732.

¹⁶ Ibid.

However, Morones pointed out:

...you cannot do the impossible and the Mexican people are so poor, they live so close to the margin of mere existence that it is simply out of the question to make any attempt to get the money from them for the payment of the debt when, as a matter of fact, they are barely succeeding in living from day to day on a little corn and beans; that with patience and cooperation, Mexico will discharge all its debts.¹⁷

In Sheffield's opinion, Morones considered several possibilities to counterbalance North American pressure exerted because of the petroleum controversy. These would include support from Europe, Latin America, and the A.F.L. Sheffield urged stern measures to "teach the Mexicans," who looked upon the A.F.L. relationship as assuring a policy of United States non-action towards Mexico, and upon a steadily maintained propaganda to assure a free hand for the "further despoliation of American citizens."¹⁸ Morones, interviewed by a New York Times staff correspondent, described CROM's relation with the A.F.L. as being a reciprocal influence in exchanging information and data. He mentioned Green, Woll, and Morrison, all A.F.L. national officials, as being among "the numerous leaders who have evidenced their approval of the new land and oil laws."¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., March 5, 1926, 711.12/752.

¹⁸Ibid., February 16, 1926, 711.12/685.

¹⁹New York Times, January 17, 1926.

AMBIGUOUS PRONOUNCEMENTS

In December, 1926, the Association of Producers of Petroleum in Mexico telegraphed Morones complaining that the Mexican government "has not demonstrated to such of the companies as are foreign corporations how any valid confirmatory concession, whatever its form, can be issued to them." Moreover, the companies maintained that they were "justly entitled" to an ample opportunity to consider the form and the definite terms of any proposed confirmatory concessions which the government expected them to accept as constituting a valid recognition and affirmation of their existing definite and legal leasehold rights.²⁰

Morones responded that Mexico would not extend the December 31 deadline, and denied that El Corona, El Aguila, Atlantic, The Richmond Oil Company, and the Transcontinental were alien companies.²¹ According to their articles of registration, Morones contended, they were Mexican companies; and the shareholders were regarded as being Mexicans because they had renounced any right to appeal to their own governments from the rulings of the Mexican courts. He denied that the delay in granting concessions was attributable to his office, but instead to the "inopportune presentation of legal documents by the interested companies." Morones pointed out that the companies had had sufficient opportunity to familiarize themselves with the

²⁰Ibid., December 15, 1926.

²¹The Times (London), December 18, 1926.

rules which the Ministry had explained at various conferences. Therefore, he concluded, the government "had again shown its good faith in guaranteeing the interests of foreigners in the oil industry."²²

Oil men were confused by Morones' reply, and observers were perplexed by his apparent ambiguities and inconsistencies; traits which he followed throughout the petroleum controversy. Declaring that failure to comply with the law by December 21, 1926 meant renouncement of rights, Morones at the same time asserted that the law did not establish "forfeiture" for violations. Concerning the regulations governing oil concessions that were to go into effect on January 1, Morones' ordered his department to issue the equivocal pronouncement that only "through malice and bad faith can the law be considered retroactive."²³

Foreign oil officials often disagreed with Morones' data. George Davison, President of Mexican Gulf Oil Company, refuted several of Morones' charges that had been been printed a few days earlier in the New York Times. Davison denied that his company had drilled its Salinas wells without a permit. He alleged that these offset wells were drilled to prevent drainage of their lease through large wells brought in on adjacent railroad rights-of-way by the so-called "Control," the board through which the Mexican government availed itself of oil rights retained by the railroads.

²²New York Times, December 17, 1926.

²³Ibid., December 20, 1926.

Under private title antedating May 1, 1917, the effective date of the Mexican Constitution, Davison's company held the oil rights in lands contiguous to the railroad. Mexican Gulf Oil Company refused to surrender such rights by applying before December 31, 1926 for a governmental concession of limited term, the form and conditions of which had not been prescribed by the Mexican government when the time for applying had expired. Davison's company, however, had applied for drilling permits months before the "Control" brought in producing wells. While Morones' Department did not expressly refuse to grant the permits, it did the equivalent by simply "sitting on the requests" and delaying to rule on their applications. Davison successfully sought injunctions from the proper judge, and his company drilled two wells. He disagreed with Morones and wrote, "that the wells were 'unscientifically' drilled, or deliberately drilled into salt water, which would, primarily, have injured our own property, are charges...that refute themselves."²⁴

UNITED STATES "INVASION" OF MEXICO

During the initial decade of the Mexican Revolution, there were occasions when American troops were mobilized along the border and when war vessels were dispatched to patrol the Gulf coast. In two instances, the 1914 Veracruz occupation and the 1916 Pershing punitive expedition, American military personnel invaded Mexico. To Mexican thinking, then, an impending invasion in 1926, the purpose

²⁴New York Times, George S. Davison, editorial, May 23, 1927.

of which was to possess forcefully the disputed petroleum zones, was both plausible and expected.²⁵

According to Calles, an American employee in the United States Embassy in Mexico City sold the Mexican government photocopies of pilfered documents for 700,000 pesos.²⁶ This evidence revealed the proposed American invasion route of Mexico, with maps drawn by Military Attaché Lt. Colonel George Russell and "incriminating" private correspondence of Ambassador Sheffield and Secretary of State Kellogg.²⁷ "Plan Green" would dispatch between 150,000 and 500,000 American troops to dissect Mexico. In addition, Tampico and Veracruz were to be invaded by the U. S. Atlantic fleet, and Manzanillo by the Pacific squadron.²⁸ Other troops were to attack

²⁵ Luis N. Morones in El Excelsior, September 3, 1953.

²⁶ Armando Borrego G. in El Excelsior, September 24, 1953. Emilio Portes Gil stated he did not know the exact amount of the bribe. Interview, Mexico City, July 25, 1968. Luis León alleges that Calles set up a counter-espionage system and photocopied 600 pieces of private correspondence from the U.S. Embassy. León, "El Presidente Calles," 327. Stanley Ross writes, "The Mexicans are convinced that armed intervention was a real possibility during 1926-27 and was forestalled only by Calles' adroit use of purloined documents." "The Preferred Revolution," in Joseph Maier and Richard W. Weatherhead, eds. Politics of Change in Latin America (New York, 1964), 147-148.

²⁷ Luis N. Morones in El Universal, February 7, 1957; Armando Borrego G. in El Excelsior, September 24, 1953.

²⁸ Armando Borrego G. in El Excelsior, September 24, 1953. Morones states that "Plan Green" was formulated in 1924, and in June, 1926 Lt. Colonel Edward Davis, U.S. Military Attaché, urged its execution. Luis N. Morones in El Universal, March 6, 1957. Thirty years after the "invasion," Morones played upon his readers' emotions. Appealing to Mexican nationalism, he asserted that patriotism would have prevented the invasion's success, because Mexicans, "are accustomed to every type of holocaust and sacrifice in defense of national sovereignty." He remarked that whoever

through Ciudad Juárez and capture Monterrey to protect the United States border. Ultimately the invaders would converge on Mexico City via Querétaro and Veracruz.

Emilio Portes Gil, one of Morones' bitterest enemies, alleges that Calles defended Mexico's integrity and sent copies of documents relative to the proposed invasion sites and an ultimatum to President Coolidge threatening that Calles would publish these photocopies in the world's leading newspapers to show how the mighty United States would attack Mexico, a weak nation.²⁹ Portes Gil acknowledged that "it was one of the most brilliant episodes of our diplomacy," and that Morones "collaborated with Calles and lent

formulated the plan must not have thought of the 1847 sacrifice at Chapultepec. Morones failed to mention, however, that the Mexicans lost that war. Luis N. Morones in El Universal, February 8, 1957.

²⁹Cline, The United States and Mexico, 210. Emilio Portes Gil, interview, Mexico City, July 26, 1968. According to The Times there was said to be 304 documents, "surreptitiously photographed" in the American Embassy, most, if not all were letters exchanged between Kellogg and Sheffield. Those of Sheffield were understood to be so full of distrust and dislike of Calles that there was no hope of sympathy or understanding from the U.S. government. Naturally, Kellogg stated that they were forgeries. The Times (London), May 7, 1927. Nevertheless, Morones claims that as a result of threats to use the documents, Coolidge recalled Sheffield and the warships from Cayo Hueso. Luis N. Morones in El Excelsior, September 5, 1953; Luis N. Morones in El Universal, December 17, 1957; El Excelsior, April 6, 1963; José Petricioli in El Excelsior, April 6, 1964; José Petricioli, interview, Mexico City, June 30, 1968.

extraordinary ability and service which someday ought to be known in all of its details."³⁰

The "phantom fleet" never arrived. Morones and Calles may have fabricated the invasion which seemed very real to Mexicans, but as Howard Cline comments: "Again battleships might hover ominously off Tampico and Veracruz. But the smell of Teapot Dome was too strong."³¹

Carleton Beals offers some interesting observations on Morones and the questionable diplomatic dispatches:

On one May day celebration, when Morones and the President reviewed the parading workers, the American Ambassador,...defied the order that no taxicabs or private autos could circulate except with an order from the CROM, and persisted in driving the embassy car angrily back and forth through the paraders. A few days later Morones showed me the secret confidential letters, marked Top Secret, and "Confidential to the Secretary

³⁰ Emilio Portes Gil, "Cómo se conjuró en 1927, una intervención armada en México," Mañana, August 29, 1953, 24. The ex-president also repeats this thesis in his Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana, 397, and on July 26, 1968 when interviewed by this writer. Araiza confirms this judgment when he says: "Morones, who heroically stopped the North American invasion fleet navigating close to Mexican coasts, used a diplomacy of great proportions." Historia del movimiento obrero mexicano, IV, 202.

³¹ Cline, The United States and Mexico, 210. Standard Oil, which had bought 283,000 acres from Edward Doheny a year earlier, exerted the strongest pressure on the Coolidge administration to sever relations with Mexico on January 1, 1927, the date the legislation was to be enforced. The fact that this dispute coincided with a local hearing against Doheny of the National Association for the Protection of American Rights in Mexico, and Albert Fall, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee, dissuaded Coolidge from vigorous championship of the oil companies and intervention in Mexico on behalf of United States petroleum interests. The Times, (London), December 10, 12, 1926.

of State,"...One of them detailed 'his' harrassment on Labor Day and stated that Morones was a Bolshevik, so was the President of Mexico. He hated the Mexican government. How he got such documents, Morones would not tell me. Much later I happened to discover how they were extracted, with the connivance of one of the secretaries of the Embassy. This, however, was long after Morones was out, and Morrow was ambassador. Morrow never acknowledge (sic) my memorandum about the leak. Likely he could not afford to admit in any way that there was a traitorous leak in the Embassy (sic). The secretary however, left the service and avoided going back to the United States.³²

In March, 1970, Beals described the clandestine operations more specifically:

I discovered this leak quite by accindent (sic) by overhearing a heated quarrel in an adjoining booth in a little restaurant, between the secretary and an Italian janitor, who took the documents out of the files when quitting work, had them photostated, then restored them in the morning before other employees arrived. The quarrel was over how the money received was to be divided.

Though I cannot pin-point it by any particular documents, there is little doubt that an invasion in 1926 was being planned and was imminent. That it did not occur is

³²Beals to Buford, February 19, 1970, L.S.U. Archives. Morones permitted no cars to circulate between 9 A.M. and 3 P.M. on May Day without the identity card issued to diplomatic representatives, "C.R.O.M., Auto Oficial, Puede Transitar Libremente." According to Sheffield, "This is only one of the many indications of the strength of organized labor in this country and the inability of the central authorities to successfully cope with the labor situation." Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, Sheffield to Kellogg, May 6, 1925, 812.504/630.

perhaps due to differences in the oil industry and between the unsavory oil-owners in Mexico and the financial establishment.³³

REVERSAL OF POLICY

During the summer of 1927 several petroleum companies decided to reverse their original intention of drilling wells on pre-constitutional properties without the permits which they sought, but which the Mexican government had refused to issue. The initial step of this program was taken by the Huasteca Petroleum Company as a result of a visit to New York of one of its Mexican counsels who argued that the decision to drill without permits amounted to conspiracy against the Mexican government. Morones had also informed a representative of the Huasteca company that the government intended, "come what may," to prevent, by force of arms if necessary, the drilling of wells on preconstitutional lands which had not been the subject of petitions for confirmation of rights. In view of these facts, and that the onset of the rainy season,

³³Beals to Buford, March 6, 1970, L.S.U. Archives. The janitor and secretary were conversing in English since they figured no one in the "lousy little restaurant" understood this language. Interview, Baton Rouge, April 13, 1970. Morones seldom arrived at his ministry office before 7:00 P.M. Then he had various officials report on routine matters he had delegated them. Beals says that Morones: "rarely worked except at night, a midnight appointment with him was no rarity. He began his night's work in a barber's chair, with a very beautiful girl doing his nails, and frequently had appointments while he was being shaved. I was present once when the head of the petroleum industry was reporting to him, first from once (sic) side of the chair then the other. The final step in the process was to have drops of murine put in his eyes." Beals to Buford, March 6, 1970, L.S.U. Archives.

which made drilling operations more difficult than usual, the companies decided to defer continuing with their plan to drill without permits. The decision was also facilitated by petroleum overproduction elsewhere than in Mexico; this eased the pressure upon various companies to continue maximum production.³⁴

To ease the immediate difficulties, Coolidge withdrew Sheffield from the Embassy and named Dwight Morrow, a former Amherst classmate, as his new ambassador to Mexico. Morrow was a partner in the banking house of J. P. Morgan and Company and a man of wide legal and financial experience. As a partner in the Morgan firm, Morrow had easy access to factual data on Mexico's domestic and foreign problems, and was remarkably well-informed on that country's situation. Carefully, and not unsympathetically, he studied the interesting, experimental program of the Mexican labor movement, and CROM's theories and actions.³⁵ After assuming his ambassadorial position, Morrow maintained informal relations with Calles, Morones, and other cabinet members, and, realizing that they were not bolsheviks, Morrow reversed Sheffield's policy of hostility.

In dispelling tenseness and suspicion and in stimulating confidence, Morrow invited the popular American humorist Will Rogers to visit him, meet President Calles, and be his unofficial assistant.

³⁴Schoenfeld to Kellogg, August 8, 1927, 812.6363/2339, Foreign Relations, 1927, III, 185-186.

³⁵Harold Nicolson, Dwight Morrow (New York, 1935), 336.

Rogers and Calles toured northern Mexico for a week in the presidential train. Later Rogers was given an ambassadorial dinner in the University Club, where the speeches of good fellowship were so prolonged that "the fellows were ready to fly at each other's throats."³⁶

Morrow was also aided by the psychological effect of the visit of the American aviation idol, Charles Lindbergh. Following the world enthusiasm resulting from his famous trans-Atlantic flight, Lindbergh arrived December 14 by a non-stop flight from Washington, D.C. The young pilot flew to Mexico in the capacity of a private citizen (with State Department consent) as the guest of the Mexican government, and in response to an invitation extended by President Calles.³⁷ Upon landing, Lindbergh was met by Calles who gave him "un fuerte abrazo" (a warm bearhug).

The aviator-idol was officially welcomed and feted throughout his sojourn. The Chamber of Deputies received him in full session formally declaring him to be "an Ambassador of Good-Will to the Mexican People." On December 17, Calles called for Ambassador Morrow and Colonel Lindbergh at the American Embassy and escorted them to a fete at the National Stadium. Later, 80,000 Mexicans including the presidential party of Calles, Morones, cabinet members, and other functionaries attended the reception held to

³⁶ Ibid., 312; Homer Croy, Our Will Rogers (New York, 1953), 223-224; Charles W. Hackett, "Success of Lindbergh's Good-Will Mission to Mexico," Current History, XXVII (February, 1928), 727-729.

³⁷ New York Times, December 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 1927; Hackett, "Success of Lindbergh's Good-Will Mission," 727.

honor the American pilot.³⁸ The following morning Lindbergh stood with Morones, Morrow and other government officials on the balcony of the National Palace where 180,000 paraded in Lindbergh's honor.³⁹

Another factor forcing Morones to an amicable settlement of the oil dispute was the fear of "external pressure." As Vicente Lombardo Toledano explained in a speech delivered February 22, 1938 to the First General Ordinary Congress of the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos:

One day -- I shall never forget it as long as I live -- the then President of the Supreme Court was called to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, and Morones transmitted to him the order of General Calles: 'Mr. President of the Court, the Government is in danger, and before external pressure obliges us to submit, it is necessary that the Supreme Court declare the Petroleum Law unconstitutional and decide in favor of the oil companies.'⁴⁰

The incident illustrates the legal inconsistencies to which the Supreme Court was prone. Freedom and equality in this tribunal were a legal fiction; the judiciary, like the legislature, was subordinate to the executive.

In the landmark case of the Mexican Petroleum Company, an appeal was made from a lower court in Veracruz. The Supreme Court granted an injunction on November 17, 1927 restraining Morones from enforcing Articles 14 and 15 of the Petroleum Law, and from cancelling the drilling permits granted to the company in Panuco.

³⁸"El héroe máximo del siglo XX," C.R.O.M., supplement to January 1, 1928, 53. After receiving a parchment, Lindbergh posed for photographs with Morones and other leading cromistas.

³⁹Ibid., 53, 62.

⁴⁰Weyl, The Reconquest of Mexico, 292.

The decision did not hold that the entire petroleum law was unconstitutional, or even that the two articles in question were, except in the specific case under review. Nevertheless, foreign oil producers construed the decision to mean that it would be followed by other decisions which would eliminate the worst features of the law, since no Act of the Mexican Congress could be finally declared outside the Constitution until the Supreme Court rendered five decisions on the same legal questions.

Following this reversal, Calles on December 26, after many informal conferences with Morrow, submitted proposed amendments to the Mexican Congress designed to bring the laws into accord with the Supreme Court ruling. A bill to this effect passed unanimously at its first reading. It was given executive approval by Calles on January 3, 1928, and eight days later the amendments went into force when they were published in the Mexican Gazette.⁴¹

The new legislation provided for confirmatory concessions (without cost and without limit to time) of certain rights derived from lands on which petroleum exploitation had begun prior to May 1, 1917, of rights derived from contracts before the same date with surface owners for the purpose of oil exploitation, and of rights of operators of pipe lines and refineries under concessions or authorizations from the Department of Industry, Commerce, and Labor.

⁴¹New York Times, December 27, 28, 30, 1928; The Times (London), January 13, 1928. Newspapers attributed this revision of governmental policies concerning oil regulations to Morones' having offered his resignation. New York Times, December 4, 1927. Once again, Morones faked a resignation. In this way he could appear to be a disappointed, but staunch patriot.

Early in February, 1928, a committee of American and foreign oil companies submitted a draft of proposed amendments from the Petroleum Regulations Conferences to Morones' ministry. Morones refused to accept them. As soon as this fact was learned, informal conferences were held between Morones, Morrow, and their representatives to frame amendments to the Petroleum Regulations which would place them in harmony with the recently amended law. Several weeks of negotiations followed "which were characterized by the utmost friendliness on both sides."⁴² A new draft was prepared by Morrow and J. Reuben Clark which was tactfully based, not upon what the petroleum companies wanted, but upon various statements made at different periods by Mexican ministers. This was eventually accepted by the companies and by Morones.⁴³

On March 27, on behalf of Morrow, the American Embassy issued a press release that virtually recognized the termination of the more than a decade long petroleum controversy. The release said:

President Calles, on the advice of Minister Morones, has now issued new Regulations modifying the old Regulations in accordance with the decision of the Supreme Court and the new act of Congress. These new Regulations make clear what Minister Morones had already made clear in his letter, that those who take confirmatory concessions under the amended law get a confirmation of their old rights rather than a new grant of rights. The

⁴²J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "The Oil Settlement with Mexico," Foreign Affairs, VI (July, 1928), 612. Morones did not attend all the conferences on the topic. This was done by a Mr. Paredes, his representative.

⁴³Morrow to Kellogg, March 6, 1928, 812.6363/2524, Foreign Relations, 1928, III, 298.

form of confirmatory concession as set out in the new Regulations expressly declares that it is 'to operate as recognition of acquired rights which continue in force'....In the informal conversations which have taken place, Minister Morones and his official staff have approached the whole matter with a disposition to frame the Regulations in such a way as to meet such essential points as are susceptible of adjustment of general provisions.⁴⁴

That same day the Department of Industry distributed to the press copies of the executive decree signed by Calles. These contained the amendments in question, together with the form to be used in issuing confirmatory concessions on petroleum lands acquired prior to May 1, 1917. These amended regulations, which Calles signed on March 27, were promulgated the next day and "ended" the oil controversy between the United States and Mexico. The contentions of the State Department were accepted on all essential points in dispute. American business interests had scored another significant victory abroad.

Concerning Calles' motivation in precipitating the quarrel with the foreign petroleum companies and their governments, several interpretations may be taken into consideration. One of the president's 1926 speeches delivered to a labor convention sheds some light on his reasoning:

⁴⁴Ibid., Statement Handed to the Press on Behalf of Ambassador Morrow, March 27, 1928, 306-307. Morrow discreetly complimented Morones when he said: "I can not allow to pass this opportunity of telling you of my sincere appreciation of the spirit of fairness which has characterized the attitude of yourself and of the members of your staff in the informal discussions which have taken place regarding the amended regulations." Ibid., Morrow to Morones, March 27, 1928, 300.

I have endeavored to demonstrate that Mexico can, with its own resources alone, be developed and win its economic freedom.... My object has been to achieve the economic independence of our country, because without economic independence political independence is impossible.... You may be absolutely assured that this we will do -- ⁴⁵ Mexico, economically, shall be independent.

According to this discourse, the policy of his administration was the achievement of political independence through economic independence. Of course Mexico lacked sufficient drilling equipment, trained personnel, and finances required to obtain them. In a confidential note that Morrow sent to Kellogg, Calles assured Morrow that the 1925 law resulted from the necessity to satisfy the wishes of the radical wing of the revolutionary group. ⁴⁶

Morones, wishing to augment his explanations following Portes Gil's 1953 statements in Siempre about "Morones saving Mexico from invasion," and Licenciado Isidro Fabela's 1956 series "La política internacional del Presidente Cárdenas" published in El Excelsior, in which Fabela alleged the same and urged Morones to reveal the details, published his almost daily "Calles obligó a las compañías petroleras a cumplir las leyes." A rambling, biased defense published in El Universal from December, 1956 to March, 1957, this article constitutes Morones' major writing, and

⁴⁵ Frederick F. Barker, "New Laws and Nationalism in Mexico," Foreign Affairs, V (July, 1927), 591.

⁴⁶ Morrow to Kellogg, November 8, 1927, 812.6363 in Lorenzo Meyer, México y Estados Unidos en el conflicto petrolero, 1917-1942 (México, D.F., 1968), 160.

partly explains his role in the petroleum controversy. Taken from Morones' personal archives and written in what he terms "an impartial approach," Morones' major thesis is that the "rebellious petroleum companies" refused to obey Mexican laws and made an international issue "out of a purely domestic problem."⁴⁷ According to cromistas, Morones' role was to issue the December, 1925 regulations which "combatted the imperialist penetration and served as antecedents for the oil expropriation in 1938."⁴⁸

⁴⁷Luis N. Morones in El Universal, December 17, 20, 1956; New York Times, February 2, 1927.

⁴⁸Rogelio de la Selva in El Excelsior, April 7, 1964; "Morones, el decano de los líderes," Siempre, April 15, 1964, 9; José Petricioli, interview, Mexico City, June 30, 1968. Meyer refers to Morones as the "artifice" of the December, 1925 regulations. México y Estados Unidos en el conflicto petrolero, 1917-1942, 161.

CHAPTER VII

MORONES AND THE CHURCH

CATHOLIC LABOR GROUPS

Although the church tried to counterbalance the labor movement with Catholic Labor Circles, party organization, and various programs of social action, Catholic unions were negligible. By 1925, the national organization called the National Catholic Workers' Confederation falsely claimed 22,000 members and close to 400 unions; but most organized workers, though considering themselves Catholic, were affiliated with CROM despite the fact that in opposition to Morones the "priests declared from the pulpits that membership in CROM constituted a mortal sin."¹

CRISTERO REBELLION

Calles' greatest struggles with the Church began in 1926 when he enforced Article 3 of the 1917 Constitution which required that primary education be secular, and Article 130 which severely limited the number of priests in Mexico. Beginning in February, Calles deported foreign priests and nuns, confiscated clerical residences, church schools and seminaries; required all Mexican priests to register with the civil authorities, accused the hierarchy of treason, and prohibited criticism of the government by the clergy and clerical newspapers. The crisis deepened when the Mexican hierarchy supported

¹Alba, The Mexicans, 159. Morones alleged that the National Catholic Workers' Confederation was "not national, possibly not Catholic, and not a confederation." New York Times, August 23, 1926.

by Rome, refused to accept Calles' regulations. On August 1, Mexican bishops retaliated by suspending church services throughout the country. As a result, six members of the upper clergy were expelled by the government for "seditious activities." Atrocities on both sides, as well as propaganda issued by the Church and Mexican governmental sources, kept emotions high.

Morones exerted significant influence in the formation and execution of administration policies even in the enforcement of the anticlerical articles of the Constitution.² He was no friend of the organized Church, and helped to create social tensions when he personally advised Calles to execute constitutional provisions and establish a Mexican Catholic Church which would be independent of the Vatican.³ Calles' and Morones' actions helped provoke a chaotic three-year armed insurrection, 1926-29, known as the Cristero Rebellion, during which CROM supported him throughout the ruthless, sanguinary crisis.⁴

Morones directed terrorist operations from Mexico City giving orders through intermediaries mafia-style. His CROM furnished shock

²Eugene Maur Braderman, A Study of Political Parties in Mexico since 1890 (Urbana, 1938), 211.

³Medina Ruíz, Calles, un destino melancólico, 96-97.

⁴J. Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America: a History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations (Rev. ed.; Chapel Hill, 1966), 398. Cristeros, self-style warriors for "Christ the King," operated mainly in Jalisco and west-central states where they roamed the countryside burning public schools, killing teachers, and dynamiting trains. Miguel Gil, without specifying any reasons, writes that Morones "provoked" the religious conflict. See his vehement "Morones al desnudo" series in La Prensa, February 7, 1938.

troops, political assassinations, demonstrations, and mob actions. On August 1, 1926, Morones staged a parade of over 50,000 men and women to support Calles' religious policy. Among these were 10,000 employees of the government departments who had been warned to attend on threat of losing their jobs. Other CROM members, the majority of them Catholics, were also compelled to participate under warnings of dismissal, reduction of salary, and the difficulty of obtaining future work. Through the silent and almost deserted Mexico City streets CROM members, government employees, and several thousand farmers from nearby districts carried banners acclaiming Calles' position and denouncing the Catholic clergy. Numerous placards announced: "Immoral Priests Pervert Society," "The Clergy are Rich, the People Poor," "Sensible People Applaud Calles," and "Calles is a Disciple of Juárez." Rumors of possible violence help explain the remarkable absence of spectators. The column took more than two and a half hours to pass the reviewing stand in the Cathedral Plaza, where Calles stood surrounded by high military officials and all the cabinet except Finance Minister Pani who disapproved of the religious laws. Morones and Puig Casauranc, who addressed the marchers, assailed the Catholic Church which they charged started the uprising against the Mexican president.⁵

⁵The Times (London), August 3, 1926; New York Times, August 2, 1926. Morones accused the foreign oil companies and the high clergy of combining to provoke and launch the Cristero Rebellion. Luis N. Morones in Las Novedades, September 5, 1953; Luis N. Morones in El Excelsior, September 5, 1953; Luis N. Morones in El Universal, August 13, 1956.

On August 6, 1926, Morones concluded his public debate with Luis Mier y Terán, a Catholic student in the Esperanza Iris Theater. During the course of their heated discussion, Morones and his opponent almost "came to blows." Morones' speech was violent, and gave further indications that the government had no intentions of affecting a compromise. He accused the American Knights of Columbus at their convention held the previous week in Philadelphia of adopting a resolution seeking to precipitate immediate intervention by the United States government. "Catholics," he shouted, "have resorted to the old expedient of providing an international conflict." Menacingly, he warned: "The Government of Mexico will not tremble before the Vatican. The Roman Pontiff does not govern Mexico and, if he did, we would have gone back 100 years."⁶ Mier y Terán, he asserted, was delegated by the Catholics to represent the Church because their officials sought to deceive everyone by making it appear that Mexican youth supported the Church. Morones made a distinction between the deity and organized religion when he said: "The youth are in the revolutionary ranks. They are with the free men who preserve their belief. You believe in God. We all do. The campaign is not against God, but it is against the pharisees."⁷

⁶"Los mismos que vienen a hablarnos de patriotismo tracionan a su patria, provocando conflictos internacionales," C.R.O.M., 1926, 48-51; New York Times, August 11, 1926. For a brief account of the debate, see Antonio Uroz, La cuestion religiosa en Mexico, (Mexico, D.F., 1926), 246-265.

⁷New York Times, August 11, 1926.

Morones also opined that "The Church has always been the enemy of the proletariat and this especially is illustrated in Mexico." Replying, Mier charged that Morones had challenged Catholics to take up arms in defense of the religious cause.⁸

A.F.L. REACTION

William Green and Matthew Woll continued the Gompers tradition of defending CROM and the Mexican government against attacks in the United States. At the Detroit A.F.L. convention in 1926, CROM was attacked on the grounds that it was not a real trade union, but part of the Mexican governmental machinery because it was lending its support to President Calles against the Church. Matthew Woll, A.F.L. vice-president and a friend of Morones, issued a statement on April 4, 1926 reiterating that the friendship of American and Mexican labor would continue unchanged because American labor would not be trapped into any endorsement or condemnation of Mexican religious policies. Woll said:

We believe in our institutions and we should like to see them extended. But we do not propose to countenance the use of any force to carry our ideas among people, either military, economic, diplomatic, political or even moral force.⁹

American capital, Woll asserted, was trying to take advantage of Mexico's backwardness and of "our moral mission to Mexico," to deceive the American people into helping it swallow the country.

⁸Ibid., Salazar, Historia de la luchas proletarias en México, VI, 237.

⁹New York Times, April 5, 1926.

American labor would never allow itself to become the accomplice of such an "atrocious international blunder." The A.F.L., Woll concluded, hoped that the Mexican government would do all possible to improve the situation, if for no other reason than because the Church "is being exploited by American jingoes, Imperialists, money-grubbers, and other enemies of the Mexican people...Anomalies or evils in the Mexican Constitution afford no ground whatever for intervention or for any diplomatic or Congressional hostility to Mexico."¹⁰

MORONES' CREDO

Compelled by his mother to be an altar boy during his youth, Morones later opposed the Roman Catholic hierarchical organization, not the Roman Catholic religion. Morones stated that there existed two Christs, "el Cristo de oro de los ricos y el Cristo de los pobres";¹¹ but this appears to be more of a propaganda appeal than a statement of creed. Contrary to Morones' detractors, he was not "godless." He believed in God, "a something big," but believed that there were good and bad clerics just as there were good and bad lawyers and doctors.

Morones resented the church hierarchy and enjoyed mocking their traditions. In September, 1923, for example, a wedding occurred which was given a large amount of publicity; this was the theatrical

¹⁰The Times (London), April 6, 1926.

¹¹Petricioli, et al., Estudios proletarios, I, 239.

"First socialist matrimony celebrated in Mexico."¹² Before a crowd exceeding 3,000 gathered in the Institute of Social Sciences, Eduardo Moneda, CROM secretary general, married José Heredia and Concepción Moreno, two workers. Morones acted as the best man. On explanation for this event, written by a person who was best man in several of these weddings, is the following:

Morones decreed that all CROM members, who got married had to be married by CROM officials, and he presided over several marriage ceremonies. (sic) This was a blow at the Church, but most couples went through three marriages, the official marriage which alone was legal, then a Church ceremony, then a Labor Party marriage.¹³

Another confrontation between Morones and church leadership occurred in October, 1924, when the National Eucharistic Congress met in the capital's Olimpia Theatre. The congress wished to present "El divino Narciso," a one act religious drama written by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Morones forbade cromistas from participating in the function, and the play was cancelled.¹⁴

¹²Casasola, Historia gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana, III, 1628.

¹³Beals to Buford, February 19, 1970, L.S.U. Archives; Beals, interview, Baton Rouge, April 12, 1970.

¹⁴Moctezuma, El conflicto religioso de 1926, I, 296-298; Rius Facius, De Don Porfirio a Plutarco: historia de A.C.J.M., (Méjico, D.F., 1958), 302; Stokes, Latin American Politics, 240-241. Licenciado Alfonso Romandía Ferreira blames Morones for ordering the assault on Soledad Church, the bombing of the Basílica de Guadalupe, and placing the red-black CROM banner on Mexico City cathedral's flagpole. Luis N. Morones in El Universal, August 30, November 13, 1956. The flag incident occurred May 1, 1921 during a CROM parade celebrating "El Día del Trabajo." Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, Hanna to Secretary of State, May 2, 1921, 815.504/311.

Morones advocated restricting the Church to its strictly religious sphere because he regarded it as an obstacle to modern progress.¹⁵ Morones, when he wrote the introduction to the five volume set of La industria, el comercio y el trabajo en México durante le gestión administrativa del Señor Gral. Plutarco Elías Calles in 1928, quoted from and agreed with a segment of Pablo Macedo's La evolución mercantil, a strong indictment of the clerical position:

Ejerció el Clero notario influencia en todas las clases sociales. ¿Qué hizo de ella? Usarla en beneficio propio, y absorber las mejores tierras y las mejores fincas urbanas, sin devolver a la colectividad ni en educación, ni en instrucción, ni siquiera en ejemplo de moralidad y cultura, las fuerzas que extraía el organismo social. Por el contrario, las comunidades religiosas llegaron a ser foco de escándolo corruptor, y contra ellas ni prelados podían nada, porque estaban sustraídos a su jurisdicción.¹⁶

Morones wrote that he had "outlined here in a few sentences the typical action of the influence of a corrupt and ambitious church." In his opinion, the three most serious obstacles to Mexican economic development were, "the numerous restrictions on the free exercise of commerce, the lack of stimulation and protection of industry, and failure to liquidate the great interests of the church."¹⁷

¹⁵ Luis Enrique Morones Peña, interview, Mexico City, August 24, 1968; Berta Peña Viuda de Morones, interview, Mexico City, August 3, 1968.

¹⁶ Volume I, 11.

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

In later life, the fire-eater mellowed and was not as outspoken in his criticism of the Church. He appreciated its beauty and art, and enjoyed visiting different churches. Despite his earlier vehement anticlerical feeling, his coffin was placed between four candles and under a crucifix during his capilla ardiente (wake).¹⁹

¹⁸Picture in photograph archive of La Prensa.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1928 TO THE CROM SPITS OF 1932

CALLES CHANGES HIS MIND

Until 1927 when there were disagreements between Calles and CROM leadership, Calles toyed with the notion of having Morones succeed him. The high-living labor leader, Calles had believed, was sufficiently experienced in government and identified with the working class, which, during Calles' administration, had become a more important part of the electorate than ever before.

By 1927, Calles no longer found it profitable to be known as the "labor" or "bolshevik" president; his government was depending more and more upon the support of the right; and Morones had become unacceptable to Obregón, the agrarista bloc of deputies and senators and, to the military. Not only did the generals feel strongly that civilians had no right to the presidency, but opposed Morones because they feared he might organize labor militias which would ultimately challenge the army's preponderance.¹ Morones' CROM had formed military units which held maneuvers in Veracruz. The threat of an armed proletariat as a counterbalance to the regular army

¹Summerlin to Kellogg, July 30, 1925, ADS, 812.00/27579 in Lieuwin, Mexican Militarism, 95. Morones' widow offers an entirely different version: "Calles offered him the presidency several times, but Luis did not believe himself capable." Interview, Mexico City, August 3, 1968. Little credence can be given to her's or to the following opinion: "...he always declined his friend's desire that he be president." La Prensa, April 6, 1956. The choice was not Morones' to make in 1928.

deepened the army's distrust. Red labor batallions fought for Carranza's cause in 1917, and during the de la Huerta rebellion armed agrarians and workers had proved invaluable aids to the government against military rebels.

Calles added up the power factors. Outside of the presidency Obregón continued to wield a great deal of political influence because of his close ties with the army and agrarian interests, an influence that Calles could not counteract by favoring his labor collaborators who, with their discipline and loyalty, were not numerous enough. Calles realized that if he failed to support Obregón, a repetition of the Agua Prieta movement would occur and be backed by a majority of the military. In the face of overwhelming opposition from the divisionarios (division general, highest rank in the Mexican army), he abandoned his idea of having Morones succeed him. Realizing that Obregón was the only presidenciable (one eligible to be seriously considered as a presidential candidate), Calles cooperated with Obregón in procuring an amendment to the Constitution allowing the election of an ex-president provided his terms were not consecutive.

MYTH OF "SUFRAGIO EFECTIVO, NO REELECCION"

CROM leadership opposed this "violation of Article 83 of the 1917 Constitution," not so much on principle, as because they wanted Morones to become president. The corpulent leader resented Obregón's manipulation of the Constitution because it "cheated" him of the top office in the land. Morones' appetite for power

became insatiable; he wanted to take the big step upward. If one conceives that the principal function of a national political party organization is to elect a president, Morones' P.L.M. failed in the 1928 election.

Morones' public announcements concerning the election were often contradictory. Early in 1927 he promised that CROM would remain aloof from the agitation over the presidential candidates. His sentences were guised in lofty idealism: "For the Labor Party, the principal issue is not re-election, but how to conserve the revolutionary ideals." If this involved Obregón's re-election, labor would support him, even though this would entail a change in its principles. He urged calmness, and suggested that since Calles' term had not ended, "revolutionists" should forget future politics and support Calles. During the crucial days of the Cristero Rebellion and petroleum controversy, Morones warned: "The common enemy, reaction, continues its efforts to divide the revolution, with the hope of again coming into power." If labor "were forced to be re-electionist by the necessities of the moment to save revolutionary unity," then CROM would do so.² Thirty years later Morones still insisted this was the reason P.L.M. chiefs backed Obregón:

En el espíritu de mis compañeros estaba firmemente cimentado el principio de no reelección, y cuando nos dimos cuenta de que no apoyarlo las fuerzas revolucionarias

²New York Times, May 30, 1927; Roberto Quirós Martínez, Alvaro Obregón: su vida y su obra (n.p., 1928), 330.

podrían sufrir un quebranto en su unidad,
decidimos cooperar para su reelección.³

When the P.L.M. held its convention in September, 1927, it had not yet endorsed anyone for the presidency. The delegates considered the possibility of Morones, Gasca, Obregón, and General Francisco Serrano; but eliminated the first two because they still held government posts. Some delegates believed re-election encroached on the Constitution; others sought to prolong Calles' administration by proposing that the presidential term be lengthened to six years. The convention finally endorsed Obregón as the "labor candidate," but empowered the directive committee to withdraw its support if it so deemed. By including this stipulation, CROM leaders hoped to be able to bargain with Obregón.

OPPOSITION OF GENERALS GOMEZ AND SERRANO

Upon its being known that Obregón would again run for president, political groups of the antireeleccionista persuasion began to form around Generals Arnulfo Gómez and Francisco Serrano, the latter had once been Obregón's friend and subordinate. The 1927 campaign was bitter, especially on the gomistas' part. Gómez was outspoken in his views and offered his enemies "una parcela de tierra de dos metros para estar bajo de ella."⁴ Gómez spent the early part of Calles' administration officially studying military

³Morones to Dulles, February 16, 1957, photocopy, L.S.U. Archives.

⁴Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 7, 1956.

methods in the United States and Europe. After compiling a lengthy report on his findings he was appointed Chief of Military Operations of the important Veracruz zone. John Wood, American Consul at Veracruz, described Gómez as "calm and deliberate of speech and nonchalant when conversing in English." Gómez informed Wood: "that he has saved the life of Minister Morones and that they were friends-as friendship goes in Mexico-but that Morones was a 'son -----ch.'"⁵ His fiery personality, up-turned mustachios, and more than a touch of vanity made Gómez a picturesque candidate.

Serrano was different. A short, large-headed man with a thin face and bright eyes, he gave an impression of solid strength and capacity. Unlike Gómez, he was a doer, not a talker. Obregón had earlier considered Serrano, his former War Minister, as Calles' successor to the presidency. However, Obregón had been concerned about Serrano's whoring, drinking, gambling and addiction to night life. He sent him on a study tour in Europe hoping to mature him and improve his loose morals. Upon Serrano's return to Mexico, Obregón noticed no change, so eliminated the general from any further consideration.

Both Serrano and Gómez avowed their opposition to Obregón on the ground that he had violated the spirit of the Revolution by seeking to establish a permanent dictatorship. Each cooperated with the other, but why did one not withdraw? The answer lies in

⁵U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, April 5, 1927, 711.12/1042.

the reality that individuals or personalismo, not the alleged issue of no re-election, were of primary importance in the campaign. Neither of the two, even had he wished, could have delivered his adherents to the other. True to Gómez's reputation of being outspoken, his words made unpleasant hearing and reading for obregonistas. Most impolitic of all, Gómez spoke openly of the inevitable appeal to arms. On October 3, Serrano and thirteen others were captured, court-martialled, and shot in Cuernavaca. Gómez unsuccessfully took to the field, was captured, and executed on November 4 near Coatepec, Veracruz.

WANING OF MORONES' POWER

From 1924 to 1928 labor was the most important influence in Mexico and Morones, next to Calles, was the most important member of the government. The events of 1928 (the presidential election and subsequent assassination of Obregón), were major turning points for Morones; as Morones discovered, he was not so much the controlling element as he was the controlled. Morones, whom Obregón had earlier rescued after Carranza had sentenced him to death, now openly opposed his savior's nomination. Campaigning for re-election, Obregón made it evident that if elected he would be anti-labor (specifically anti-Morones and his corrupt associates). Morones also made his position unequivocally clear and verbally attacked Obregón during a nocturnal meeting held in the Hidalgo Theatre on April 30. However, by that time Obregón had gained sufficient support to enable him to snub CROM. Furthermore, CROM leaders engaged in personal strife which

weakened their organization. Lombardo Toledano led a group in the 1928 P.L.M. convention which suggested that the party should be dissolved because "it had confused its high mission with that of grasping political parties."⁶ This motion was primarily directed at the Grupo Acción of which Lombardo had never been a member. His influence in 1928 was insufficient to force the party's dissolution.

Obregón answered Morones' attacks and accepted his challenge declaring the Labor Party was free to withdraw its backing whenever it pleased, and announced that he could still count among his supporters enough elements to fill all government posts. With evidence of the ensuing rift and Obregón's public statement, withdrawal notices began to arrive at CROM headquarters; some were politely worded but definite in their decision. Among the most important groups to separate immediately was the state federation of Coahuila which, in a long communication dated June 8, informed CROM that it could no longer continue its affiliation, since all its elements were "identified with the politics of General Alvaro Obregón because we consider him one of the strongest supporters of the principles of the emancipation of the workers."⁷ The Confederación de Sindicatos Obreros y Campesinos of the State of Durango sent CROM the following message, "Your directors are traitors to the

⁶Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 135.

⁷Ibid., 131.

organized movement and lackeys of yanqui imperialism so we disown C.R.O.M."⁸ As subsequent events were to prove, this was the beginning of Morones' and of CROM's decline; they had bucked Calles' machine which ordered Obregón restored to the presidency.

The effective elimination of his two most serious rivals left Obregón with only the farce of "election" for the presidency. However, with Morones' attitude, militant Catholic unrest, resentment of the followers of those who had perished in the October and November phases of the campaign, and the breaking down of the Revolutionary principle of "No Re-election," uneasiness and tension hung in the air. On May 23, bombs exploded in the Chamber of Deputies. One week later a bomb went off at Obregón's election headquarters. Although Obregón was the only presidential candidate and the election result was a foregone conclusion, the government took elaborate precautions to preserve order. In anticipation of possible violence, troops were confined to barracks in readiness for riot calls; and licensed premises were closed for three days during the election.

OBREGON'S ASSASSINATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Following his election, Obregón attended a luncheon in La Bombilla, a restaurant in the fashionable resort of San Angel, several miles south of Mexico City. The band played a lively air. Obregón was seated between Aarón Sáenz, Foreign Minister in both

⁸ Alfonso Romandía Ferreira in El Universal, September 10, 1956; Quirós Martínez, Alvaro Obregón, 615.

his cabinet and that of Calles, and Colonel Ricardo Topete, his campaign manager, and was chatting with friends when a thin youth diffidently approached the table. Showing Sáenz some caricatures he had made during the banquet, he asked permission to sketch Obregón. Sáenz touched Obregón's shoulder and as the latter turned inquiringly, the youth fired five shots from a revolver which was concealed by the hat held in his right hand. All the bullets struck the president-elect in the chest; he fell forward in agony before dying.

Antonio Soto y Gama, a federal deputy and leader of the agrarian section of the Obregón bloc, demanded "absolute and radical justice." He insisted upon the complete elimination of the Labor Party from public power, and openly blamed Morones for the assassination:

We consider the head of the Labor Party and the directors of his group as the psychological authors of the crime for, with the greatest treachery they prepared the fanatic for the murder. They armed his hand.⁹

Authorities were especially concerned with Soto's declarations that "Morones must go or there will be actual war." Although P.L.M. leaders denied any connection with the crime, the National Agrarian Party remained unconvinced of their innocence, blamed Morones for his oratorical onslaughts on Obregón which had, they alleged, "heated the assassin's weak brain to the point of madness." Morones was: "psychologically responsible by causing an anti-Obregón

⁹New York Times, July 22, 1928.

atmosphere which influenced José de León Toral, a religious fanatic, to kill him."

On Friday night July 20, Soto and Aurelio Manrique, another agrarian leader, paraded with 1500 obregonistas carrying the Mexican flag draped with black crepe. Their march was a demonstration against Morones and CROM. The situation was so tense that Morones was forced to utilize armed guards. Carleton Beals found him sitting in the Labor Ministry surrounded by machine guns mounted on tripods.

Without waiting for any legal investigation, and without producing any proof to support his statement, Calles accused the whole Mexican church of the crime. Spokesmen of the clergy disclaimed all responsibility.

MORONES' RESIGNATION

The Union of Revolutionary Parties passed a resolution demanding that Calles eliminate all Labor Party members from the executive branch of government, and called upon the Federal Congress to expel Labor deputies and senators. The situation was crucial for Calles, his support in large measure was derived from Labor. In order to appease the U.R.P. and stave off drastic methods, Calles reluctantly gave way and accepted the resignations of Morones, Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor; Eduardo Moneda, director of the government printing shops; Celestino Gasca, Governor of the Federal District, and José López Córtes of the Mexico City municipal council. Instead of admitting that the true reason for his resignation was

duress, Morones claimed it was, "To assist in maintaining the unity of the revolutionary family and to facilitate the investigation of the cause of General Obregón's murder."¹⁰ Morones disappeared following his resignation. Rumors were rife, regarding his whereabouts. These included that he was hiding in Mexico City, had flown to the United States, had sailed for Havana, had fled to Guatemala, and had booked passage for Europe from Veracruz.

Calles announced that the legal inquiry he had ordered instigated against Obregón's assassin demonstrated the lack of truth that Morones was the intellectual author of the president-elect's murder. This investigation was conducted by several of Obregón's most intimate and loyal friends; Aarón Sáenz, Arturo Orcí, and Emilio Portes Gil. Portes Gil informed Calles that he personally thought that neither Morones nor other cromistas were guilty, but that public opinion pointed to them.¹¹ Arturo Orcí disagreed. He never believed that the assassination lay only in religious problems

¹⁰Ibid., July 23, 1928. Another version Morones offered was to say that he and the others resigned to redeem a pledge they had made to relinquish their government posts if their positions ever showed signs of interfering with CROM effectiveness. El Excelsior, August 23, 1928.

¹¹Portes Gil, Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana, 409-410. In his interview by journalist Zoe Beckley of the New York World, Calles answered her question about Morones' guilt, "the legal investigations against the criminal who assassinated Obregón and his accomplices demonstrate the rumor's lack of truth." The president blamed the clergy for the death. "La prensa extranjera comenta elogiadamente las declaraciones del c. General Calles," C.R.O.M., August 15, 1928, 2; "El Señor General Calles habla de los problemas nacionales," C.R.O.M., 24, 31; El Excelsior, August 3, 1928; Fernando López Portillo in El Universal, November 1, 1956.

but purely in political origins, in short, among persons who enjoyed great privileges and feared losing them -- Morones and his Grupo Acción.¹²

MORONES CLAIMS HIS INNOCENCE

Endeavoring to clear himself of complicity in Obregón's death, Morones pointed out that he had no personal quarrel with the president-elect. He claimed that earlier he had a most "satisfactory" interview with him at which time CROM had been assured that its leaders would again enjoy a position of responsibility in the Obregón government.¹³ Morones' veracity may be doubted in this instance, Obregón did not need Morones. He had enough support without him. Rumors persisted about Morones' guilt. Even if Morones were innocent, his impolitic moves and vehement anti-Obregón threats voiced during the 1928 campaign and some of his earlier strong-arm methods, such as being accused of being the intellectual author of Field Jurado's murder only four years before, cast doubt upon his innocence. Naturally Morones claimed he was innocent, and sought scapegoats in the personages of the higher clergy.¹⁴ Morones

¹²Arturo H. Orcí in El Universal, September 3, 1936.

¹³C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1938-1942, 41-63.

¹⁴Luis N. Morones in El Universal, September 27, 1956; "Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Luis N. Morones en la velada por el Partido Laborista Mexicano la noche de 21 de diciembre de 1931, para conmemorar el XII aniversario de su fundación," C.R.O.M., January 1, 1932, 32. "The most important Catholic implicated in Obregón's murder was Miguel de la Mora, Bishop of San Luis." Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 16, 1956. Until his death, Morones claimed he was innocent of the murder. During the author's

and CROM had become an embarrassment to the government and had to be eliminated. It appears that the Obregón assassination was a useful fiction to break the controversial Morones who had fallen from grace partially because he had bucked Calles' machine which ordered Obregón restored to the presidency.

On August 8, 1928, Morones wired Santiago Iglesias to come to Mexico. After receiving permission from William Green to make the trip, Iglesias departed New York and arrived in Mexico City on August 31. Accompanied by Ricardo Treviño, CROM secretary general, Iglesias proceeded to Morones' finca in Tlalpan where he found numerous CROM leaders assembled. Morones explained the object of the accusations was to create a great mass emotional upsurge which could be utilized to justify attacks upon and possible assassination of CROM leaders and destruction of the Labor Party. Morones asked that Iglesias conduct a thorough investigation upon which to base a report to William Green which, through the P.A.F.L., could be publicized throughout the world. Morones also gave him numerous

interviews with Morones' friends and relatives, this topic was one of several touchy themes. Others claiming Morones innocence are the following: Sra. Berta Peña Viuda de Morones, interview, Mexico City, August 3, 1968; Luis Enrique Morones Peña, interview, Mexico City, August 24, 1968; José Petricioli, interview, Mexico City, June 25, 1968, and Carleton Beals. According to the latter: "He was accused of having abetted the Obregon assassination. This was false he was loyal to his friends. It was rumored that he had fled from the city. I found him carrying on his work as usual at the Ministry, a bank of machine guns in the upstairs corridor." Beals to Buford, February 19, 1970, L.S.U. Archives. Among those asserting that there exists insufficient proof to blame Morones are: Emilio Portes Gil, interview, Mexico City, July 26, 1968, and Agustín Zapata Casasola, interview, Mexico City, July 16, 1968.

documents supporting the innocence of Laborites in the assassination. Among this data was a copy of the hitherto secret agreement of 1919 made between Obregón and the Labor Party. For a week Iglesias questioned laborers, government officials, military leaders, anti-reelectionists, agraristas, obregonistas, and others about the current crisis. His inquiries convinced him that neither the Church nor the labor movement was responsible for Obregón's murder.¹⁵

ASSASSIN'S TRIAL AND TESTIMONY

Was Morones psychologically and intellectually responsible for the crime? This question was debated by many with more emotion than objectivity. Toral's comments and his trial provided important insight in attempting to solve this problem. The assassin declared on July 30 that "Morones had nothing whatever to do with it." He continued,

If I were not telling the truth, I could easily take advantage by dragging some intellectual author into the affair. Morones is against our religion. I prefer to tell the truth. I did it alone.¹⁶

Before the fifty persons -- police and government officials, newspaper reporters, foreign correspondents, and photographers -- who, during the long recitation, relaxed on divans and in big comfortable chairs, Toral read his confession at police headquarters: "My soul will be saved. So will Obregón's, because I offered my life in

¹⁵ Iglesias to Green, October 4, 1928 in Snow, "Samuel Gompers and the Pan-American Federation," 220.

¹⁶ New York Times, July 31, 1928.

atonement for him." Toral looked quite unperturbed during the questioning period when he repeated, "I did it alone."¹⁷

His confession diverted attention from an earlier suspect, the Mother Superior of the Espíritu Santo Convent, Concepción Acevedo y de Llata or "La Madre Conchita." Several days before Toral's confession, Madre Conchita also had been interrogated. She was in high spirits and laughed merrily when reminded of various allegations concerning her insanity. She asserted that she had neither attended meetings of conspirators, encouraged the manufacture of bombs, nor provided poison for the alleged plot of María Elena Manzano. Asked if she could elucidate the part played by dissatisfied labor leaders, she exclaimed: "I have no Labor leaders concealed behind my skirts." She maintained her complete innocence, and at the end of the interview revealed part of her philosophy: "It is my ideal of life to be a martyr. In order to be a martyr one must be punished for a crime which one has not committed. Therefore I welcome any punishment or suffering that may come my way."¹⁸

Toral's arraignment began a few days after his confession and was held before Alonzo Mendoza, Judge of the Court of First Instance, in the municipal building of San Angel within a hundred yards of the restaurant which had been the scene of the crime. The most significant admission made by the assassin came in answer to the judge's question

¹⁷The Times (London), August 1, 1928.

¹⁸Ibid., July 27, 1928.

about who had advised him to commit the crime, to which Toral replied, "Directly no one; indirectly, La Madre Conchita." He testified that she told him that religious persecution in Mexico would be prolonged unless Obregón, Calles, and Patriarch Pérez of the schismatic Mexican church were murdered. Toral and Conchita were committed by the Court of First Instance.

Bishop Miguel de la Mora, on behalf of the Episcopal Subcommittee, promptly issued a statement repudiating the charge that the Mexican clergy was responsible for Obregón's murder. In de la Mora's denial of responsibility, he asserted, "...it is common knowledge that the nun is mentally deranged, several cases of insanity having been reported in her family, and that the complicity of one nun and a priest should not fasten guilt upon the whole clerical body."¹⁹ For Obregón's assassination no one would, of course, accept moral responsibility. But how could the Mexican hierarchy tolerate a person whose mental abnormality has been "common knowledge" as the responsible head of a convent?

The trial, which Morones did not attend, was melodramatic. A large portrait of Obregón hung above the judge's bench and facing the space set aside for the accused. Mother Concepción asked the prosecuting attorney to do his utmost to have her sent to prison, because "it would enable her to do spiritual work among the women convicts."²⁰ During the process which was broadcast to the whole

¹⁹Ibid., August 7, 1928.

²⁰Ibid., November 3, 1928.

nation by radio, Deputy Gonzalo Santos, president of the National Agrarian Party, invaded the court room at the head of other armed deputies. They threatened to shoot not only the prisoners but also the judge and jurors, and especially the attorney defending Toral, if a judgment of guilty were not rapidly rendered. During this commotion one of the men attempted to shoot the accused assassin, but missed. Court had to be adjourned for the day.²¹

The last day of the trial was equally exciting. Toral testified that some time before he became acquainted with Conchita he had convinced himself that he was the "chosen instrument" to remove Obregón and had never divulged to her his resolution to kill the president-elect. He admitted, however, that her remark that the Catholic situation in Mexico could be alleviated by the deaths of Calles and Obregón was a deciding factor in what he termed his "already well-established intention." There was a tense moment when the nun's counsel put this question to Toral:

As a man possibly on the verge of the tomb and in the interests of the peace of your country, what responsibility has Mother Concepción in the murder of General Obregón on which the prosecutor can rest the charge that she is guilty of being the intellectual author of the act?

Toral turned dramatically towards Conchita, paused for emphasis and, with this hand on his heart, said "None whatever."²²

²¹Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 133.

²²The Times (London), November 6, 1928.

On November 8, Toral and Conchita were found guilty of murder. The jury voted by eight to one to sustain all the counts in the indictment. Toral was sentenced to be shot, and Conchita because Mexican law forbade the execution of a female, to serve twenty years in prison. Neither had sympathizers inside the court room, and when their counsel in his last pleas for Toral referred to the youth's belief that by killing Obregón he would gain the "martyr's palm," those present jeered, hissed, and laughed uproariously. The spectators cheered the announcement of the verdict, and officers in court saluted the jury with their swords.

The palid Toral met his death shouting "Viva Cristo Rey" in front of the Penitenciaría del Distrito Federal with a large crowd of spectators looking on. In July, 1934, Madre Conchita was transferred to the penal colony of Las Islas Marías where freed from her vows she married Carlos Castro Balda who was serving six years for having placed dynamite explosives in the washrooms of the Chamber of Deputies in 1928.²³ The ex-nun wrote her memoirs insisting that she never knew Toral was going to assassinate Obregón. Neither she nor Toral ever suggested that Morones played a part, even indirectly, in the assassination.²⁴

Despite their testimony, many questions surround Toral's and Conchita's statements. Toral admitted that Manuel Trejo,

²³José Bravo Ugarte, México independiente (Barcelona, 1959), 400-401.

²⁴Concepción Acevedo y de Llata, Memoria de la Madre Conchita (2da ed.; México, D.F., 1962), passim.

a labor leader, furnished him with the murder weapon.²⁵ One is suspicious of Mateo Podan's statement that Toral was an active cromista, but José Petricioli candidly admitted that Toral "was a member of the CROM of long standing, though at that time he was inactive."²⁶ Another perplexing problem is Morones' relationship with Madre Conchita. H. Flores Sánchez has tried to show that her activities were financed by Morones and his group. He tells about the Recamier sisters, Amanda, Margarita, and Adela or "Llaya." Llaya, he alleges, was Morones' "third or fourth wife," and adds that she and Amanda "were well known" at the wild parties Morones held at Tlalpan. According to Sánchez, these three girls were the daughters of a sister of Madre Conchita, whom Llaya introduced to Morones.²⁷ If true, and there is sufficient room for doubt, this would make the nun Morones' mother-in-law's sister, or his "tía política." Morones, on the other hand, alleges he did not know Conchita until 1939 and then "only at sight."²⁸

Several persons claim that María Elena Manzano once saw a fat man speaking with Madre Conchita in her home. This individual

²⁵Charles W. Hackett and J. Lloyd Mecham, "The Assassination of President-Elect Obregon," Current History (September, 1928), 1026.

²⁶Mateo Podan in La Prensa, December 11, 1936; Robert J. Alexander interview of José Petricioli, Mexico City, August 27, 1948, photocopy, L.S.U. Archives.

²⁷H. Flores Sánchez in El Universal, November 3, 1956; Pablo Meneses V. in El Universal, November 3, 5, 1956; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 377.

²⁸Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 16, 1956.

was "identified" as Samuel Yúdico, one of the principal CROM leaders and "right arm" of Morones.²⁹ Yúdico died suspiciously three months before Obregón's death and rumors circulated that Morones had poisoned him.³⁰ Moronistas denied foul play and alleged that the thirty-eight year-old Grupo Acción member died of a mysterious "painful, tormenting, distressing illness."³¹ To divert suspicion, Morones led Yúdico's funeral march.

It is highly possible that Toral murdered Obregón without Morones being the intellectual author. Despite Alfonso Romandía Ferreira's statement that "numerous Catholics and high clergy knew that Obregón had decided to terminate the religious problem,"³² it is probable that Toral and others disbelieved this propaganda. Furthermore, it is obvious that Obregón's speeches did not reveal this course of action. Four months before his death, the presidential candidate indicated in a campaign speech in Guanajuato that he proposed prohibition for Mexico. Liquor, gambling, and "wicked Roman Catholics," he said were the three enemies of the country:

²⁹Pablo Meneses V. in El Universal, November 3, 5, 1956; Valente Quintana in El Universal, September 11, 1956; Alfonso Romandía Ferreira in El Universal, September 17, 20, 1956. Morones denied that Yúdico was his "right arm," asserting that all members of the Grupo Acción were equal. Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 6, 1956.

³⁰Valente Quintana in El Universal, September 11, 1956; Pablo Meneses V. in El Universal, November 3, 5, 1956; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 378.

³¹"Galería de honor," C.R.O.M., October 15, 1937, 5-6; Luis N. Morones in El Universal, October 17, 1956; "Otro gran batallador cae para no levantarse mas," C.R.O.M., supplement to May 1, 1928, 109.

³²Alfonso Romandía Ferreira in El Universal, September 18, 1956.

It may be necessary to spill a little more blood in order to eliminate the last small nuclei of these evil ones -- these false Catholics who would make of their religion a banner for fratricidal strife.

He was speaking of the Roman Catholics, who, he asserted, used their religion to propagate anti-governmental activities.³³ Furthermore, Obregón had been the attempted victim of an attack by bomb-throwing elements of the League of Religious Defense on November 13, 1927 in Chapultepec Park. After the two assailants who threw dynamite at the car in which he was riding confessed, Father Miguel Agustín Pro-Juárez, the accused intellectual author of the crime, was executed by a firing squad.

If CROM leaders could have foreseen that Obregón would never live to become president, it is possible that Morones would have never entered into open conflict with him. Furthermore the Morones-Obregón antagonism differed from that which impelled Toral to assassinate the president-elect, "so Christ could be wholly King of Mexico." Morones' verbal attacks were dictated from a Laborite angle; they implied not errors of commission on Obregón's part, but that from Morones' Revolutionist view point Obregón had not gone far enough. Such attacks, if they were noted by Toral at all, would have been deemed by him favorable to Obregón, rather than condemnatory.

³³The Times (London), March 28, 1928.

CONTINUISMO

With Obregón's murder, Calles' term expiring, and the amended Constitution requiring a full term lapse before a president could return to office, Calles faced a dilemma. He viewed his only resort as continuismo -- to impose a weaker politician in the presidency while Calles remained in power behind his puppet. To satisfy the disappointed obregonistas, Calles chose one of their number, Emilio Portes Gil, civilian political boss from Tamaulipas. Portes Gil was "selected and duly elected" provisional president of Mexico by unanimous vote of the national congress. Calles managed to surmount a major obstacle by convincing military leaders that the balance of power was so evenly distributed among them that any attempt to choose an army candidate would result in deadlock and civil war.³⁴

A few days before leaving the presidency Calles, in an effort to achieve peace between CROM leaders and the president-elect, called a meeting at the home of Puig Casauranc, the new Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor. Portes Gil attended as did Eduardo Moneda and Ricardo Treviño, two prominent cromistas. Morones was conspicuous by his absence. After an interval of complaints from each side -- particularly regarding the conflicts in Tamaulipas -- CROM and the incoming governmental head "agreed" to peace and cooperation.³⁵

³⁴Robert E. Scott, Mexican Government in Transition, (Urbana, 1959), 121.

³⁵Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 410.

One can argue that CROM and Portes Gil could have accomplished a rapprochement except for one factor. Probably there was no more determined enemy of Morones in all Mexico than Portes Gil, and enmity toward Morones meant hostility toward CROM and the P.L.M. As governor of Tamaulipas (1925-28), Portes Gil substituted other labor organizations for CROM unions, and through a series of conflicts between the two groups, he upheld his own unions. CROM combined a maximum of trouble with a minimum of result; it emerged "on the short end" in its clashes with the strong-willed, anti-Morones governor.

FOUNDING OF THE P.N.R.

With the split between CROM leadership and Calles, the organization's functional ability broke down and the Labor Party's role declined. Calles organized a new party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party), as the basis for his control. P.N.R. was a relatively simple coalition of local political machines, farm organizations, and labor organizations bound together by Calles' personalismo and power. The party brought together the Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and Aarón Sáenz groups, and Calles hoped to play one off against the other and thus remain in power behind the scenes. With the aid of plenty of government money for mordidas (bribes), Calles managed to split the Agrarian Party, buy off or purge opponents of his P.N.R. such as Soto y Gama, and to add the agraristas to his coalition.

It is not difficult to determine why Morones vacillated on joining the P.N.R. Partly because of his hatred of Portes Gil, personal ambition, suspicions of Calles' motives, lack of encouragement



Courtesy Emilio Portes Gil

PRESIDENT EMILIO PORTES GIL

from Calles, public opinion connecting cromistas with Obregón's murder, and reasons best known to himself, Morones and his CROM remained recalcitrant and aloof from the P.N.R.

If Morones made a bad choice when he failed to support Obregón, he showed equally poor judgment when he rejected Calles and his new political party. With such disadvantageous political thinking and illogical reasoning what followed was bitter evidence of Morones' miscalculations and error in failing to enter the party. The decision was of crucial importance since the future of CROM lay in a reproachment with Calles and Portes Gil. Morones blocked any possible reconciliation. Without foreseeing the consequences, Morones blundered and adopted a policy, the results of which were disastrous. Mexico had no traditionally defined place for a "loyal opposition" in her politics. The initial reaction was to suspect the opposition of disloyalty to the regime. The wisest plan would have been to foster the friendship of those in political positions of power in order to carry forward, or at least maintain, the gains already accomplished.

MORONES VS. PORTES GIL

With relations far from being harmonious, the open breach and direct confrontation between CROM and the recently installed Portes Gil government came in December, 1928. When the ninth annual CROM convention met in Mexico City on December 4 two plays were running there in Roberto Soto's Lírico Theatre, Desmoronamiento and Según tu

Portes Gil.³⁶ Soto, a noted actor, presented severe criticism in the form of a caricature of Morones on his finca at Tlalpan presiding over great bacchanales. One scene portrayed the labor gangster half nude, surrounded by prostitutes and high officials of the former government with Morones lifting a bottle to shout, "Long live the proletariat."³⁷ CROM passed a resolution demanding that President Portes Gil end the performance because it might "excite the political passions of the moment, cause a dangerous disorder, and give origin to conflicts that should be avoided."³⁸ Portes Gil refused, and since CROM had warned it would take the "necessary steps" if the President refused, Portes Gil arranged for protection by 150 policemen. CROM then voted to abandon the Lírico Theatre where it had held some of its meetings since they now considered it government property. They also voted that all CROM members holding positions of responsibility in the government should resign at once (an almost empty gesture because cromistas held few positions since the resignations of July). CROM retaliation also included withdrawing

³⁶"Dissolution," a pun of Morones' name and "According to you, Portes Gil."

³⁷Blanco Moheno, Crónica de la Revolución Mexicana, III, 72, 115; Portes Gil, Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana, 490.

³⁸El Universal, December 19, 1928; Emilio Portes Gil, interview Mexico City, July 26, 1968. In his message of refusal sent to CROM, Portes Gil denied that cromistas were being persecuted and that he used his presidential power to create hostilities against any organization. In rejecting their request to cancel the productions, he reiterated a statement made in his inaugural address that the right of criticism would be respected and protected by his administration. Charles W. Hackett, "Labor Opposition to Portes Gil Government," Current History, XXIX (February, 1929), 850.

its delegates from the labor-employer conventions called by Portes Gil to formulate a federal labor law.³⁹ While CROM made these protests, Morones was being verbally attacked in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate. Senator Antonio Valdez Ramírez referred to Morones, Treviño, and Lombardo Toledano as enemies of Obregón who pretended to support and aid the workers and campesinos for political ends. Senator Lauro G. Caloca, among others, termed Morones "The Pig of the Revolution," and a slavemaster for whom the workers lost a day of their monthly salaries to finance Morones' cars and bacchanales.

Portes Gil opined that Morones has become his most bitter enemy and that the labor leader began an "unjustified fight."⁴⁰ The verbal warfare began the weekend after Portes Gil assumed the presidency when CROM met for its ninth annual convention. Morones was elected CROM president on December 4 and a committee was formed to invite former president Calles to address the group and become CROM's honorary president. Calles attended the convention and sat next to Morones uninformed that the latter would attack Portes Gil.⁴¹ Upon being advised that a group of disturbers had threatened to invade the meeting, Morones militantly announced to his organization that if there were any violence against its

³⁹Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 138; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 411.

⁴⁰Emilio Portes Gil, interview, Mexico City, July 26, 1968; Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana, 487.

⁴¹Blanco Moheno, Crónica de la Revolución Mexicana, 114.

members even by Portes Gil, the unions throughout Mexico would lay down their tools, refuse to work, and call a general strike.⁴²

Morones' aggressive statement added to Portes Gil's anger and annoyance. The primary objective should have been reconciliation and cooler heads might have used restraint, but not Morones. He boldly voiced his indignation. One explanation of his strategy is that he resented the position in which he found himself, "had neither patience nor self-control to await future events, and acted without a well-thought-out plan."⁴³

CROM DISINTEGRATION

Morones' political eclipse meant the disintegration of the labor movement. His administration-backed organization had enjoyed a monopoly, but now without it CROM lost its cohesiveness. Clark describes the president's methods which accentuated CROM's depletion:

The police and military forces, so freely used by Morones in organizing for the C.R.O.M., were now used just as freely to destroy it; labor inspectors began to throw their influence against C.R.O.M. organizations and to create opposing groups. In difficulties with employers, unions were given to understand that they could be entirely successful if, first, they separated from the C.R.O.M. So great was the pressure that a number of unions asked the C.R.O.M. for permission to separate from it openly, although secretly retaining their membership, as one means of escaping the persecution of state and municipal officials. All the methods the C.R.O.M. had employed were now turned against it.⁴⁴

⁴²New York Times, December 8, 1928.

⁴³Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 141.

⁴⁴Ibid., 134.



Courtesy La Prensa

CROM MANIFESTATION, MAY 1, 1929

Portes Gil was able to use military force against Morones and CROM partly because "the army had always been unfriendly to them."⁴⁵ CROM leaders had used their power in government to attempt to absorb the railroad brotherhoods into CROM. They were unsuccessful. They also failed to suppress the C.G.T., a more radical trade union. Portes Gil used both these groups, communists, and other movements to undermine Morones.

As relations between government leaders and CROM chieftains worsened, widespread dissatisfaction and long-felt antagonisms against Morones began to be expressed openly. The speed with which Morones' CROM had grown was matched by the rapidity with which it disintegrated. His organization was racked with one split after another, most of them fomented or encouraged by state governors or ministers of the national government in accord with the regime's overall policy to divide CROM. In a loosely knit labor organization and with the president's displeasure, Morones' sanctions against seceding labor organizations were largely ineffective. In the textile districts of Veracruz and Puebla CROM unions maintained themselves for years, but in the country as a whole the confederation shrank in size.

During its hegemony, CROM maintained censorship. Morones exercised his control over printers, linotypers, reporters, and other newspaper employees to establish a strictly enforced censorship so that no articles critical of CROM or its leadership appeared.

⁴⁵ Emilio Portes Gil in El Excelsior, December 10, 1928.

The control was exercised most directly through the mechanical departments which held up any article, news item, or editorial the linotyper deemed objectionable, until it was passed upon by Eduardo Moneda, one of the leading CROM leaders, head of the Unión de Linotipistas, Federación de Artes Gráficas, and of the government print shops. Morones had arrogantly used his power, and the staffs of the large dailies were delighted to escape from his rule. The reporters were the first to leave CROM unions. Emboldened by their results, they were followed by the workers in the government printing shops, and later by those in the commercial printing establishments, especially in the capital. In mid-December the Union of Newspaper Editors and Reporters withdrew, and on December 14 charges of misappropriation of funds totaling more than 1,700,000 pesos by CROM executives were made by the Union of Slaughterhouse Workers and given wide news coverage.⁴⁶ Luis Araiza writes of Morones that:

after his resignation and fall, his enemies departed from their previous cowardice and jumped like a pack of ravenous hounds and attacked the man that before they dare not face flinging insults, injury, or slander.⁴⁷

The completely changed status of CROM is evident by reading the capitoline newspapers after July, 1928.

How could CROM gain independence from political ties? It had to become more self-supporting. This would have required an increased

⁴⁶Hackett, "Labor Opposition to Portes Gil Government," 851.

⁴⁷Araiza, Historia del movimiento obrero mexicano, III, 109.

ability or willingness of the members to pay dues, but a serious consequence of CROM's fall from official favor was a depleted treasury. No longer was the government willing to subsidize its activities or contribute to its party's coffers. Levies upon government employees' salaries now went, not to the P.L.M., but to the P.N.R. This explanation for the lack of funds was read before the CROM convention held in 1928:

...the unfortunate events of July, when the President-elect was assassinated, wrested from us some sources of cooperation... since...a large number of employees related to C.R.O.M....all of whom had spontaneously offered their economic cooperation, can no longer be counted upon for support.⁴⁸

For the first time in its history, it became important that union dues be paid. Even in the Grupo Acción, Morones was the only member in 1929 who was in a position to provide extensive financial aid to CROM.⁴⁹

In 1930 Frank Tannenbaum addressed the Fifth Seminar of the Committee of Cultural Relations with Latin America in the Federal District and asserted:

⁴⁸ Archivo de la CROM, expediente 0/141(000)/8. The privilege of collecting from government employees was carried to an extreme undreamed of by labor. Portes Gil, by a presidential decree issued just before he left office, declared that the salary of every government employee, from highest to lowest, was subject to a discount of one day's wage in every month of thirty-one days. The P.N.R. was derisively dubbed the "Party of the Thirty-one." Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 143.

⁴⁹ Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 143.

The interesting thing about the Mexican trade union movement is that it is not in any way a personal movement. It is true that some individuals like Mr. Morones have played important parts, but it is not a movement depending on any one individual. This is significant.⁵⁰

The now deceased Mexicanist stated further that Morones and 18 others got together 10 or 15 years earlier and through every crisis, even at the death of Obregón when it seemed as if every individual of any importance in the trade union movement would be destroyed, when every pressure was exerted upon them to turn against the movement and force for themselves a place of prestige, that "not a single one turned traitor to the group." He then opined: "If Mr. Morones were to die or be killed, the CROM as such would go on. This group has left behind an institution much larger and more enduring than any of the individuals involved."⁵¹ Subsequent events proved the astute observer's analysis to be basically correct.

FEDERAL LABOR LAW OF 1931

Article 123 of the Constitution, the expression of labor ideals, was framed in general terms and required an elaborate code for its concrete application. The federal government increased its legal control over the labor movement with the passage of the Federal Labor Law in August, 1931, when all the labor legislation

⁵⁰ Frank Tannenbaum, "Significance of the Mexican Trade Union Movement," in The Genius of Mexico, ed. Hubert C. Herring and Katherine Terrill (New York, 1931), 186.

⁵¹ Ibid.

that had been enacted by the various states was rescinded by the promulgation of this national code for labor. The legislation defined the rights and obligations of labor and management in collective bargaining, aspects of labor contracts, and regularized relations between management and labor.⁵² No Mexican worker could be fired or laid off without "just cause." The worker was considered the owner of his job and compensation must be paid if it was taken from him.

Morones opposed the new code whose purpose, he claimed, was "to restrict labor's rights and attract foreign capital to Mexico." Speaking before the Unión de Empleados de Restaurants y Similares in Orizaba, Morones alleged that it was evidence of its authors' incapacity and incomprehension of the situation of fifteen million Mexicans "feeling the grasp of misery." To regulate Article 123 in this method was a "backward step, unpatriotic, antirevolutionary," and beneficial to the patrón class and capitalists. The government did not realize that the laborers during the depression were dissatisfied, but reasoned that the agitation was only due to leaders who wanted to take advantage of the situation and seek the limelight; "they are not dealing with Morones but with a social class." He denied that CROM was an element causing confusion and disorder and

⁵²United States Department of Labor, Labor Legislation of Mexico, Bulletin No. 569 of the Foreign Labor Laws Series (Washington, 1932), 566-579 contains a sketch of the provisions.

vaguely urged that "by using cooperation and discipline, triumph will be ours."⁵³

As the world depression engulfed Mexico in the early 1930's, the masses demanded their right to strike which had been curtailed by Morones and Calles. Abelardo Rodríguez as Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, urged workers not to strike in 1932. Realizing that he had to discover fresh arguments to prevent strikes, he abandoned Morones' worn-out contention that because union leaders held government posts the interests of the working class were protected without strikes:

...it is logical to infer that the strikes in communications services are bound to increase our ills considerably, because the distribution of products will be upset, raising the prices of transportation sometimes to a prohibitory level. Then...the rate of unemployment will increase, because the...communications are restricted, the small businessman, the industrialist, the farmer, and so on, will paralyze their enterprises and many will remain jobless who at present find in these activities their daily sustenance.⁵⁴

Neither Ortiz Rubio, who left office without finishing his term, nor General Abelardo Rodríguez who succeeded him, did much for the labor movement during their presidencies, and Morones' power continued to wane.

⁵³C.R.C.M., May 15, 1931, 31-36.

⁵⁴Abelardo Rodríguez in El Nacional, July 7, 1932.

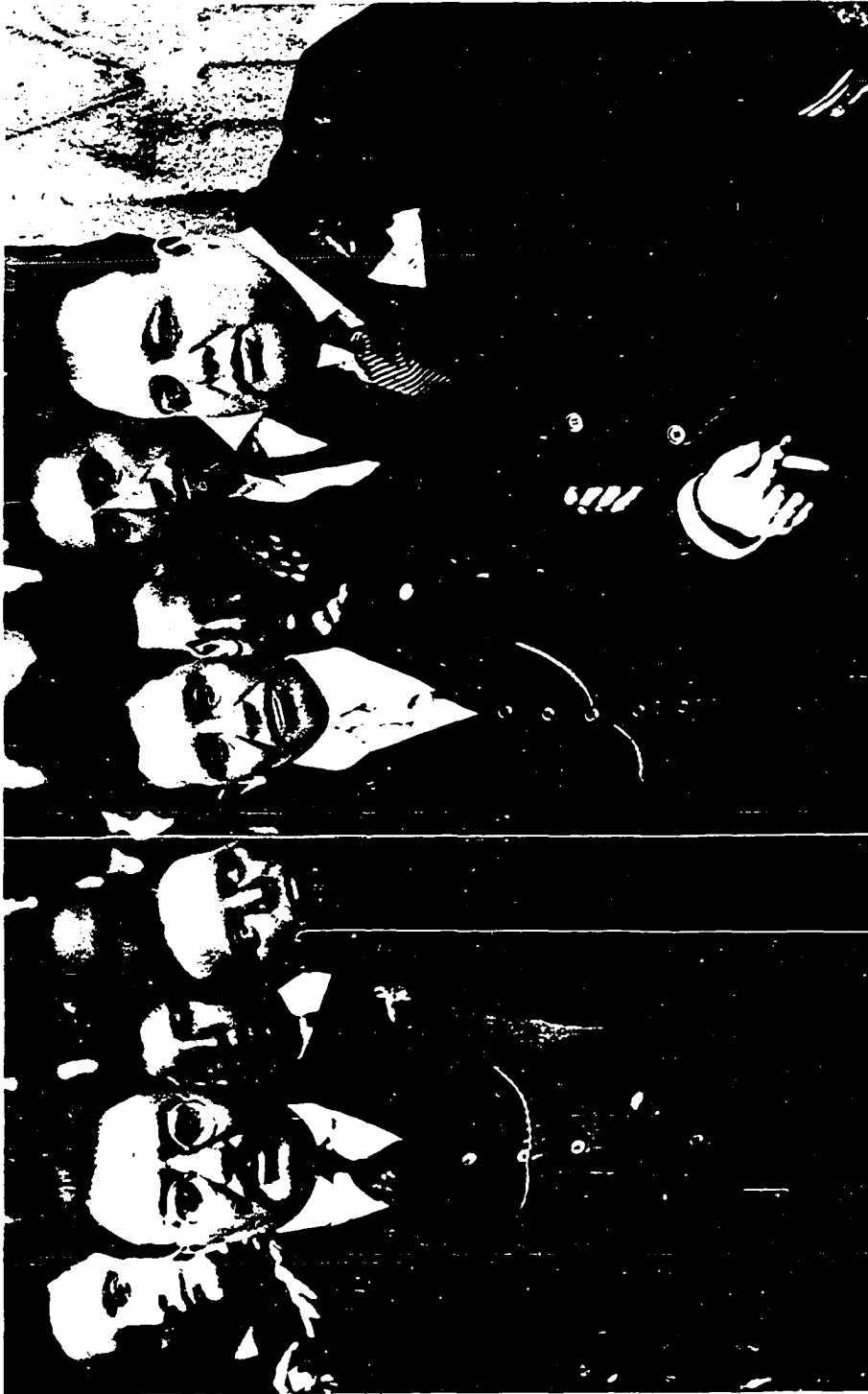
"CROM WILL BOUNCE BACK"

Before the twelfth anniversary meeting of the founding of the P.L.M. held in January, 1932, Morones refuted the charge that after four years of "CROM persecution" the Labor Party was inactive. What appeared inertia, he continued, was an avoidance of "ostentatious movements" which would hurt the P.L.M. He then warned that "it will be no small surprise to P.L.M. enemies to see how CROM will bounce back." Later that year, the Labor Party attempted a resumption of political activity by running candidates for the Chamber of Deputies. Morones was permitted a vote of only seventy-eight in his district, which made excellent propaganda against CROM. So thoroughly did the P.N.R. control the election that every pro-CROM vote cast was done at the risk of physical injury.⁵⁵

INCARCERATION

Morones' criticism of the authorities and his various actions brought him to jail only twice; both times were for brief periods. After attending the Convention of the Syndicates of Workers and Campesinos of the State of Puebla, Morones visited Colima, Manzanillo, and Guadalajara before proceeding to Mazatlán where a meeting of cromistas was to be held. The 16th of August he left for Los Mochis, Sinaloa to investigate a labor conflict in the United Sugar Companies. Around midnight of August 17, 1932, Jacobo Holguín, Chief of Police of Los Mochis, arrested Morones for "spreading

⁵⁵Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 146-147.



Courtesy Archivo Casasola

LUIS N. MORONES

LUIS GUTIERREZ

CELESTINO GASCA

subversive propaganda," specifically for supposed attacks on the army and government of the State of Sinaloa.⁵⁶ This action followed Morones' speech that night in which he had energetically condemned United Sugar Companies' policies.

According to CROM headquarters, "many" accompanied Morones to the jail desiring to be detained with him, and "crowds" of sympathizers spent two days and nights outside the municipal jail protesting the "unjust" arrest of their incarcerated chief. Aníbal Ocaya Payán, a CROM lawyer in Mexico City, flew to Morones' aid on the 19th. That night Morones was released, and wired CROM offices in the capital that he had "energetically and clearly answered numerous accusations before the Ministerio Público y Procurador de Justicia."⁵⁷ During his brief stay in Hermosillo, Morones discussed labor problems in general, and cromista difficulties in particular with the state governor. He completed his tour speaking in Mexicali, Tecate, Tijuana, and Ciudad Juárez on August 28. He returned to Mexico City, where "fireworks" began within CROM in September.

CROM SPLITS OF 1932

The heterogeneity of memberships that produces conflict in organizations is particularly striking in labor movements. It produces lines of cleavage around which struggles often rage with large degrees of intensity. In 1932, two new splits proved CROM's

⁵⁶C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1928-1932, 558; New York Times, August 20, 21, 1932.

⁵⁷"La comisión de la C.R.O.M. que encabeza el compañero Luis N. Morones llegó a la Ciudad de México, después de un resonado triunfo," C.R.O.M., September 15, 1932, 47; C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1928-1932, 558.

coalition unworkable. Alfredo Pérez Medina had been a CROM "problem child" for a long time. Members of the Grupo Acción claim Obregón had earlier offered him a "considerable sum" to withdraw the Federal Districts unions from CROM. In December, 1931, the Grupo Acción tried one last desperate expedient to rid themselves of Pérez Medina, but to retain control of these unions. They finally expelled Pérez Medina on flimsy charges CROM had passed a motion in December, 1928 that all its members must withdraw from government administrative positions, and Pérez Medina had continued his position in the Executive Council of the National Bank until December, 1931 without protest. The official reasons for the expulsion were his "abusing" his position of secretary general of the Federación de Sindicatos Obreros del Distrito Federal and for his "having been converted into an agent of capitalism."⁵⁸ The true explanation was that the Grupo Acción had long been eager to drive Pérez Medina from CROM, but hoped to do so without subsequent loss of membership. When he refused to recognize the sentence of suspension, CROM expelled him, and with him went almost every important CROM union in the Federal District.

Instead of Pérez Medina and his followers admitting they were outside of CROM, on the contrary, they claimed they were the CROM in the Federal District. Previous to this occurrence, Morones' CROM had been content with a modest sign on its offices at Calle

⁵⁸"Discurso del compañero Luis N. Morones pronunciado en el Teatro Lírico de la Ciudad de México," C.R.O.M., May 15, 1933, 28.

República de Cuba #60. No sooner was the separation accomplished than a huge painted canvas sign was hung, announcing "C.R.O.M." to be replaced by an electric sign of the same nature.⁵⁹

The other important secession in 1932 was led by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a relatively important leader of CROM since his entrance. In 1928, Lombardo had unsuccessfully proposed the dissolution of the P.L.M., the corrupted political arm of CROM. In March, 1932, Morones returned from a trip to Europe and CROM held a big public meeting to receive him. To his surprise, Morones was greeted by boos, hisses, and shouts of derision from the hostile Lombardo Toledano faction. Partly as a result of this incident there was ill-feeling between the two leaders. Lombardo planned to take over CROM in its next convention to be held in late 1932, but was defeated in the election for secretary general. In September, 1932, Lombardo was the principal speaker at a workers' conference and launched a sizzling attack against the army. Following him on the platform, Morones repudiated Lombardo's remarks concerning the military, accused him of propagating foreign ideas, and of betraying the Revolution.⁶⁰ Toledano, having his policies publicly repudiated, resigned from CROM's central committee the next day on tactical and ideological grounds. The following is a segment of Lombardo's letter of resignation:

⁵⁹Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 262-268.

⁶⁰Lombardo Toledano, Teoría y práctica, 63.

Compañero Morones is against the ideology that I have sustained because he thinks it is a radical one and harmful to the labor organization. He has stated that the organization cannot maintain an advanced doctrinary program nor establish itself as a permanent censor of the state and its government and, at the same time, call upon the government to solve its problems, as I have been constantly doing. He has stated that the labor organization cannot hope for its salvation as a social class but instead must work for the improvement of living conditions of all social classes, and that one must not dream of utopias like internationalism.

These assertions, among others, were made as a criticism of my speech, and the manner in which they were emphasized suggests, according to my interpretations...that my presence in the CROM is a hindrance to Compañero Morones in his present dealings with the government, which consist of, in his own words, offering anew his cooperation to the government....

I am an enemy of the bourgeois regime and often I am against the government, yet I have friends among government officials, and I make appointments with all of them to ask for strict observance of the law and for the protection of the working class...

I will thus continue being a radical Marxist, even though not a Communist....I will continue being an internationalist and shall fight against a chauvinistic nationalism and in sum will continue fighting for the advent of a better life, having liquidated first the current bourgeois system.⁶¹

Not only was this resignation accepted, but CROM leadership expelled him from the labor organization.

Lombardo's expulsion robbed CROM of one of its more forceful and dynamic spokesmen. By capturing some of the old CROM unions

⁶¹Leafar Agetro, Las luchas proletarias de Veracruz (Jalapa, 1942), 197-200 in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels, eds.; Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940 (New York, 1969), 184-185.

and by organizing new ones, Lombardo created the C.G.O.C.M. or Confederación General de Obreros y Campesinos. A number of his associates, who had received their training under Morones, were still open to bribery; but the new organization was considerably superior to CROM in both honesty and in theoretical foundation. CROM's influence dwindled to controlling the textile industry in Puebla and Veracruz, an area where workers had a longer trade-union tradition, especially with CROM. As a result of the 1932 secessions, the Mexican labor movement of the early 1930's was factionalized.

COMPARISON OF LOMBARDO TOLEDANO AND MORONES

Lombardo Toledano was a contrast to Morones. Morones was a laborer risen from the ranks, Lombardo came from a background of wealth and privilege; Morones was a man of action with little formal education and a limited intelligence; Lombardo was an intellectual from the universities and an author with a broad philosophical background who wrote from a knowledge of theory, laws, and ethics; Morones was fat, gross, and ostentatious; Lombardo was thin, rather short and reserved; Morones put primary emphasis on building labor unions as political weapons; Lombardo thought economic weapons were more important; Morones formed his own political party, Lombardo did not; Morones told the workers to put national development before social gain; Lombardo rejected this priority and admonished the workers to fight for present improvement.

Both were fiery speakers and ambitious men.⁶³

⁶³According to one Cuban labor lawyer, Lombardo "era un orador de primer orden." Fermín Humberto Arrieta, interview, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, November 14, 1970. Dr. Arrieta heard Lombardo address a meeting of the Cuban Federation of Workers in Havana in the 1940's.

CHAPTER IX

MORONES' DECLINE UNDER CARDENAS, 1934-40

By 1933, Mexico was tired of callismo. Catholics were desperate; campesinos feared they would never own the land that had been promised them, and workers were chafing under Morones' diminishing labor dictatorship and his moratorium on strikes. On Calles' advice, the P.N.R. convention adopted the Six-Year Plan as its platform. The plan was designed to advance the proletarian cause, solve the agrarian problem, reorganize the national economy, conduct a vast system of public works, and install better education in the schools. General Lázaro Cárdenas was selected to sell this fantastic piece of demagogy to the Mexican people.

The P.L.M. celebrated its eighth convention in the Capitolio Theater in Mexico City, June 9-11, 1930. Following Morones' and Celestino Gasca's farcical nomination as the party's presidential candidates, Morones stated it was an "inopportune time" to launch a Laborite's candidacy. Other nominees were Cárdenas of Michoacán, and Colonel Adalberto Tejeda, ex-governor of Veracruz. Numerous delegates were from Veracruz and there was much enthusiasm for the veracruzano until cromista Sabino Calderón delivered a sensational speech accusing Tejeda and Lombardo of having sought to use the P.L.M. and CROM for personal ends; and censured Tejeda for "having served capitalist classes when he occupied high office." Cárdenas then won the nomination 765-22.

Cárdenas, invited by Morones, addressed the convention. Two months later Cárdenas was invited to attend another P.L.M. rally on September 29. Morones, addressing the group in Orizaba's Llave Theater, informed the presidential aspirant that "We have always considered you, Mr. Cárdenas as a sincere and sane element, a promise, a new hope."¹ Cárdenas, in his acceptance speech, stated he would revamp the economy so that Mexico would have a new orientation to benefit the working class.

Cárdenas was a dark horse who had fought in the revolutionary ranks and as governor of Michoacán had earned a reputation for building schools and enforcing the land laws. Calles was careful not to allow him too much latitude and Cárdenas' first cabinet was filled with callistas in key positions. When Cárdenas was inaugurated on December 1, 1934, he realized that he was considered as Calles' instrument, and immediately set out to create a personality for himself independent of Calles. He believed in the P.N.R. program of paper promises and immediately began giving Mexicans some of the things which Calles had only promised them. To attract the peóns, Cárdenas offered land, not only to the villages in the form of ejidos, the former practice of the Revolution, but to individuals as well. He carried on a well-planned campaign to gain the army's confidence, placing military chieftains loyal to him in command of strategic zones.

¹"Velada en honor del Gral, de Div. Lázaro Cárdenas candidato del Partido Laborista Mexicano, efectuada en al Teatro Llave de Orizaba, Ver., patrocinada por el Partido Veracruzano del Trabajo," C.R.O.M., supplement no. 225, 21.

CARDENAS' LABOR POLICY

Cárdenas was clever enough to win the loyalty of the peasants, army, and workers. To attract this last group, he encouraged organization and strikes. Labor renewed its militancy and the 1930's became turbulent years for Mexico as strikes began throughout the country. In 1930 there were fifteen involving approximately 4,000 workers, in 1934 the strike total rose to 202 involving 14,685 workers, and by 1935 there were 642 strikes.²

With his advent to power, Cárdenas became interested in unifying the labor movement which had been splintered earlier. At first skeptical of Cárdenas because he was the hand-picked candidate of Calles' oligarchy, the Lombardo Toledano unions rallied to Cárdenas' support when he broke with Calles. Lombardo began negotiations with other labor leaders to merge into a single powerful confederation to fill the vacuum created by CROM's fall. The founding meeting of the new labor organization was held in Mexico City and all existing major labor groups, except Morones' CROM, sent delegates. The Confederación de Trabajadores de México (C.T.M.--Confederation of Mexican Workers) emerged from this conference. C.T.M. had a class struggle orientation, its original motto was "For a society without classes." Although Lombardo held no governmental position, he ran a bigger, smoother-working monopoly

²Secretaría de la Economía Nacional, Anuario estadístico de los Estados Mexicanos, 1940 (México, D.F. 1940), 376. After the election of 1934, CROM tried to persuade the new president of its good intentions and at the same time convince him of the "sinister" character of its principal enemy, Lombardo Toledano.

than did Morones. The C.T.M. was favored with grants of money, guarantees of union activity, and persecution of its enemies -- these were favors and obstacles which Morones could not overcome. Cárdenas accelerated his attacks on Calles and Morones by encouraging all anti-CROM labor elements, including communists, to seek political shelter under the P.N.R. roof. Larger in size and political power than when Morones and Calles were "siamese twins," the C.T.M. became one of Cárdenas' pillars of support. Although Cárdenas supported the C.T.M., conditions were never convenient to crush CROM as well as some other unions and state federations which remained outside the C.T.M. Thus, in the case of CROM at an earlier date, the ideal of a single confederation acting as a spokesman for the whole labor movement was not realized in spite of overt government support. The story of labor in the late 1930's was essentially the story of C.T.M. expansion.

One notes a change in Lombardo's tactics. From 1923 to 1932 when he was in CROM he maintained a strict trade-unionist point of view, insisting that the labor unions should function primarily as economic organizations for defense of their rights against employers. Following his break with Morones who disagreed with this viewpoint and before the formation of the C.T.M., Lombardo moved toward a position in which he considered the role of trade unions being political as well as economic.

Morones selected Lombardo and other opposition leaders as his "whipping boys" and often lashed out at them during CROM meetings. Frequent targets were the "Five Little Wolves" who deserted Morones

in the 1930's and ultimately monopolized the top C.T.M. offices: Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Fidel Velázquez, Fernando Amilpa, Alfonso Sánchez Madariaga, and Jesús Yúren.

Labor questions became increasingly complex -- characterized by conflicts between employers and employees and bitter feuds between rival groups of labor. Relations between the C.T.M. and CROM rapidly became hostile. In 1935 and 1936, seventy-two workers were murdered in inter-union wars in the Atlixco textile region. Soon after the June, 1935 crisis between Calles and Cárdenas, cromistas renewed their attacks with riots, train wrecks, and other violent disturbances of the peace.

In July, 1935, Morones journeyed to Washington to confer with A.F.L. leaders. He went to obtain future cooperation between CROM and the A.F.L.; this, he believed, was the remedy for exploitation of Mexican workers in the United States. He said in English, with a heavy Spanish accent, "every Mexican insufficiently paid in the Southwest or West signifies a U.S. citizen insufficiently paid or idle."³ He spent the major part of July 6 with Harvey Flemming, President of the International Association of Workers of Oilfields, Wells, Gas and Refineries. On July 12, Morones made a brief speech praising Gompers for his cooperation lent to Latin America and laid a floral offering at his statue at the intersection of 10th Street and Massachusetts Avenue. John P. Frey, Santiago Iglesias, William

³C.R.O.M., August 1, 1935, 31. Morones very seldom spoke in English.

Green, Frank Morrison, Philip Murray, and John L. Lewis, President of the Miner's Union were a few of the A.F.L. officials there with Morones.⁴

Morones, who was in the United States, was not encouraged to attend the twelfth CROM convention July 23-26, 1935. With the disintegration of Calles' political machine in Mexico, the prestige of his henchman, Morones, fell considerably in labor circles, and even within his own CROM. It is not surprising, therefore, that this convention gave only a luke-warm response to Morones' San Antonio telegram which "hinted" for a welcoming gesture from the Grupo Acción that he end his trip in the American republic.

Relations between Calles and Cárdenas worsened. On Calles' instructions, Morones organized CROM strikes in Veracruz, Tlaxcala, and Puebla against "communist activities," a term used by leading cromistas in reference to the labor agitation permitted by Cárdenas. The growing uneasiness increased a few days later on Friday, December 13, 1935, when a tri-motor plane returning from Los Angeles landed at Mexico City's Balbuena Airport. The aircraft which brought Morones and Calles, who had stayed a few months in Los Angeles "for health purposes," had stopped at Hermosillo, Mazatlán, and Guadalajara, but neither had left the plane. Unexpectedly they had returned to Mexico. Those who welcomed Calles as he followed Morones out of the plane included Senator Manuel Riva

⁴Ibid.

Palacio (Mexico), Senator Bernardo Bandala (Puebla), Senator Francisco L. Terminel (Sonora), Rodolfo Elías Calles, Juan de Dios Bojórquez, Bartolomé Vargas Lugo, Ricardo Treviño (CROM secretary general), José López Cortés, General Manuel Medinaveytia (Chief of Operations in the Valley of Mexico), and General Alejandro Mange.⁵

A car took Calles, Morones, Mange, and Fernando Torreblanca to Calles' residence where the ex-president was greeted by old friends, among whom were General José María Tapía and General Joaquín Amaro, Director of the Military College. At first it appeared that Calles had nothing to say except that he had returned "to reside definitely in his country." Later that evening he issued a strongly worded press statement which said that he had come to defend the callista regime from the slanders of which he had been the "victim" for the past six months.

Calles' arrival, accompanied by Morones, aroused a storm of protest. Illustrative of this uneasiness were the 80,000 workers who paraded before the National Palace on December 22 demanding expulsion. "Out with Calles and Morones" was the keynote of the day. In the halls of the Senate, students agitated against their presence in the country. Portes Gil publicly declared, "I consider that the gravest error Calles has committed in his life is to have returned and above all accompanied by Luis N. Morones."⁶

⁵Portes Gil, Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana, 701; Eduardo J. Correa, El balance del cardenismo (Méjico, D.F., 1941), 97.

⁶El Excelsior, December 16, 1935.

The political teapot began to boil more furiously than ever in the four months following Calles' and Morones' return. The situation assumed graver overtones when all officials who had welcomed Calles found themselves out of office. Senators Riva Palacio, Terminié, Bandala, Elías Pérez Gómez (Morelos), and Cristóbal Bustamante (Sinaloa); ten members of the Chamber of Deputies, and the governors of Sonora (Ramón Ramos), Sinaloa (Manuel Páez), Guanajuato (Jesús Yañez Maya), and Durango (Carlos Real), were expelled for "treason to the revolutionary program and conspiring against the country's institutions."⁷

CACHE OF ARMS

On December 18, the Mexican Senate convened as a grand jury and indicted Morones for sedition and incitement to rebellion. Mexico City seethed with excitement and two days later the public was treated to another sensation when the Chief of Police announced the discovery of a cache of arms, machine guns, rifles, and ammunition in two of Morones' houses on December 20. At midnight, a policeman had noticed two men carrying large suitcases in the street. The late hour and the location made him suspicious of their actions. The officer halted the pair, forced them to open the luggage bearing the initials "L.M." and found four machine guns and ammunition. Upon being arrested, the men claimed they were "offered 50 pesos each for carrying the bags two blocks by a man who said he was a member of

⁷Ibid., December 15, 1935; The Times (London), December 20, 1935; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 661.

the army." Both men were from Orizaba, and police found each had a return ticket to that Veracruz town. Entering two of Morones' properties, the Chief of Police discovered nine Thompson machine guns, approximately sixty 30-30 mausers, and 13,000 cartridges.⁸

Morones was summoned by the authorities, but waited almost a week to respond to their call. On Christmas Eve, Morones appeared before the Attorney General accompanied by Reynaldo Cervantes Torres and Aníbal Ocana Payán, the same lawyer who had aided him in Los Mochis three years earlier. Explaining his position, Morones testified that the arms and ammunition had been there since 1923 and were acquired with Obregón's permission. These were to be used to arm laborers during the de la Huerta rebellion. His evidence consisted of documents revealing that the weapons were acquired by the Mexican Consul in New York with the official authorization and intervention of the Secretary of War and Navy.⁹ Morones asserted it was impossible that one person constitute "a rebellion" and "it is infantile to believe we are going to start a revolution with such old and inservicable arms."

Morones' testimony left many questions unanswered. He alleged that the arms were to be used for self-defense against the "imminent

⁸ El Excelsior, December 21, 1935; New York Times, December 21, 1935; photograph in La Prensa photo archives.

⁹ El Excelsior, December 25, 1935; El Universal, December 25, 1935; New York Times, December 27, 1935; Casasola, Historia gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana, III, 2202; "El c. Luis N. Morones, explica el origen de las armas que se encontraron en su poder," C.R.Q.M., supplement no. 273, 28; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 668.



Courtesy La Prensa

WEAPONS FOUND IN MORONES' HOME, DECEMBER, 1935

invasion" of Lombardo-communists who were going to assault "various CROM offices and buildings." He further stated that neither Calles nor other cromistas knew of the weapons.¹⁰ If Morones was expecting an "invasion" why would he wish to conceal the possession of the weapons from the persons and property he wished to defend? Furthermore, how effective would "old and inservicable" weapons be to repel invading armed cetemistas? The January 1, 1936 issue of C.R.O.M. availed itself of the opportunity to declare its organization had helped boost Cárdenas to power, and had never opposed any of his principles.

EXPULSION OF CELESTINO GASCA

The CROM national council met in early January to treat matters pertinent to CROM. One important item on the agenda was the organ's constituting itself as a grand jury to hear Celestino Gasca defend comments he had published in El Día on December 29, 1935. Following Gasca's 3½ hour defense, he was found guilty and expelled from CROM. Allegedly he was ejected because the charges he made against Morones and the central committee were "inopportune, anti-syndical, and pernicious for CROM."¹¹ The "Old Guard" continued to disintegrate.

¹⁰For additional information of the arms incident see: New York Times, December 21, 25, 27, 1935; Josephus Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat (Chapel Hill, 1947), 62, and Casasola, Historia grafica de la Revolución Mexicana, III, 2202.

¹¹"El c. Celestino Gasca expulsado de la C.R.O.M.." C.R.O.M., January 15, 1936, 9.

"CRIME WITHOUT PRECEDENT"

In April, 1936, the people of the State of Veracruz were agitated. For one reason a gubernatorial election campaign was in progress in which early prominent candidates were Colonel Eduardo Hernández Cházaro, the former secretary of President Ortiz Rubio; and Deputy Manlio Fabio Altamirano, a former manager of the P.N.R.'s El Nacional. This campaign saw the assassination of Altamirano in June, and in August, the election of Licenciado Miguel Alemán who became a strong candidate late in the campaign after the slaying. Veracruz in April was also the scene of conflicts between Morones' CROM and Lombardo's recently-founded C.T.M. At Orizaba, CROM called a strike which President Cárdenas declared to be unjustified.¹²

The Veracruz incidents were further complicated in April, when the British-operated Ferrocarril Mexicano's night train from the port of Veracruz to Mexico City took on an oil-burning locomotive at Paseo del Macho and began to wind its way through the rugged uplands toward the capital. At 9:10 P.M., when the train had rumbled half way across Paso Grande Bridge two hours out of Veracruz, a dynamite explosion slapped the locomotive and tender against the bank of a forty foot ravine and hurled two sleeping cars to the ravine's bottom.¹³ The other coaches, which had not reached the trestle remained on the rails, but the wreckage was

¹²El Universal, April 8, 1936; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 674-675.

¹³El Universal, April 7, 1936; El Excelsior, April 7, 1936; The Times (London), April 8, 1936; "Bomb at Bridge," Time, April 20, 1936, 66.

engulfed by the flames which burst forth from the oil tank car. Thirteen persons died and eighteen were injured in this "crime without precedent."¹⁴ Government investigators discovered two hundred yards of double wire leading from the bridge to a detonator, and several passengers testified they had heard a rifle shot, "obviously" a signal to detonate the dynamite, before the explosion.¹⁵

Calles' and Cárdenas' problems apparently came to a head with this startling incident since a contingent of Cárdenas' politicians were passengers on the sabotaged train. Thus, one motive was furnished by the presence on the trains of politicians among whom were the three candidates of the P.N.R. in the primary elections for the governorship of Veracruz held the previous week. These were Colonel Eduardo Hernández Cházaro, Ochoa Zamudio, and Guillermo Padilla. Hernández Cházaro spoke with Cárdenas about the event, and was convinced that his own enemies had done the bombing. Despite the fact that there was a large amount of money aboard the express car, government officials disregarded robbery as a pretext. For example, Senator Ernesto Soto Reyes, President of the Left Wing bloc in the Senate, denied that robbery was the motive, and declared "the outrage of dynamiting was the work of some politicians."¹⁶ This was part of an accusation issued on April 9, 1936 by the Left Wing in

¹⁴El Universal, April 8, 1936.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶El Excelsior, April 10, 1936.

connection with the Paso Grande dynamiting: "It concerns a diabolic maneuver by a political sector recently displaced from the Administration."¹⁷ This assertion cast doubt on Calles and discredited Morones and other cromistas who were suspected of having masterminded the catastrophe. The C.T.M. also issued a strong protest, accusing various individuals of trying to cause uneasiness and strife:

The reactionary elements, the most intransigent capitans of the bourgeois, politicians already liquidated before history, and a group of dishonest labor leaders have in recent weeks increased their counter-revolutionary work and have sought to cause various sorts of upsets in the normal progress of the country.¹⁸

Despite various allegations of Morones' guilt, no concrete evidence substantiated these charges. On the same day that the Left Wing announced its censure, Police Chief Vicente González, complying with orders "from the top," instructed Lorenzo Díaz González, acting head of the Safety Commission, to place Calles, Morones, Luis León, and Melchor Ortega under guard. Suspected of complicity in the crime, they were to be thrown out of the country.¹⁹ One historian made the comment: "All great men have had in their hour of decline some

¹⁷El Universal, April 10, 1936; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 675. One member of the Left Wing was Dámaso Cardenas, brother of the Mexican president.

¹⁸Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 675.

¹⁹Ibid. Morones' widow, son, and personal secretary assert that Morones was not involved in the tragedy. Emilio Portes Gil, Alfonso Sánchez Madariaga, and Agustín Zapata Casasola in their interviews declared that any claim that Morones was the intellectual author of the railway disaster is pure hearsay and cannot be proven.

weakness, disease, or fault. Napoleon had cancer. Calles had Morones."²⁰

EXILED

The Mexican Chief Executive publicly demonstrated his political independence that same week when he forcibly exiled the "iron man" who had governed Mexico as unofficial dictator since 1924. The process was rapid and secret. One day the "Supreme Chief of the Revolution" and his former strong-arm man, Morones, found themselves unceremoniously dumped across the U.S. border. Calles' forced exit demonstrated graphically to anyone who might need further convincing that President Cárdenas was master of the political situation. Unequivocally, but peacefully, Cárdenas proved his political independence and supremacy.

The surprise began when General Rafael Navarro, Chief of Operations in the Valley of Mexico, accompanied by twenty soldiers of the Nineteenth Infantry Regiment and eight policemen went to Calles' home at midnight of April 9, 1936. The ex-president was in his bedroom reading Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf when the authorities entered. Calmly Calles stated, "At your orders, gentlemen." "By orders of the President you are arrested," Navarro replied solemnly, "and will leave the country at 7:00 A.M." Calles removed the bed-covers, put on his slippers, stood, and stated: "I am your prisoner.

²⁰Blanco Moheno, Crónica de la Revolución Mexicana, III, 11.



Courtesy Archivo Casasola

LUIS N. MORONES DURING CARDENAS' PRESIDENCY

I have no forces at my command nor do I need them. You may put me on the airplane or before a firing squad."²¹

Earlier that day Morones was apprehended at 2:00 P.M. when he arrived at his residence on Avenida Insurgentes where his car was "curbed" by a detective. After being informed that Police Chief Gongález wished to speak with him and that he must leave his vehicle to ride in the detective's, Morones turned pale. Perhaps visions of the "last ride" passed through Morones' mind. Upon surrendering the small "Star" pistol which he carried in his coat pocket, Morones gave the officer a 50 peso bill as a mordida (bribe) requesting that CROM offices and his wife be informed. Attempting a bit of psychology Morones confided, "No one will know I offered you the money."²² The detective refused the bribe, but accepted the weapon.

Morones protested his arrest and detention at Police Headquarters. He was taken to a cell in the Sixth Commissariat, but objected stating he was no bandit and was undeserving of such "a sinister place." He spent a sleepless night, frequently knocking at the metal door with the hope of easing his predicament.

General Rafael Melchor Ortega, ex-governor of Guanajuato, was arrested in Tehuacán, Puebla. Like Morones he was disarmed and placed in a Sixth Commissariat cell.

²¹Carlos Alvear Acevedo, Lázaro Cárdenas: el hombre y el mito (México, D.F., 1961), 131.

²²El Universal, April 11, 1936; El Excelsior, April 11, 1936; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 677.

Luis León, Calles' ex-minister of Agriculture, was arrested at 6:00 P.M. after leaving his palatial home in Chapultepec Heights. León's detention, like that of the others, was secret, rapid, and accomplished without difficulty.²³

The following morning Calles was taken to Balbuena Airport where to his surprise he found Morones, León, and Melchor Ortega who had been conveyed from their cells at 6:00 A.M.²⁴ The 58 year-old Calles was silent during the boarding procedure, and the forced departure from Mexico occurred on Good Friday in a trimotor plane of the Mexican Airlines. During refueling in Tampico, the exiles merely looked out the windows and were forbidden to leave the aircraft.

Josephus Daniels, the U.S. Ambassador in Mexico City, received a telephone call at 8:30 A.M. from Eduardo Hay, Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations, stating apologetically that an airplane containing Calles and others was bound for Brownsville. The exiles, Hay explained, "Had not had time" to obtain a visa. Could the Ambassador arrange for the Calles party to enter the U.S. as political refugees? Daniels telephoned Washington, and arrangements were made for the ex-president and his cronies to land in the south Texas town "as visitors to the U.S."²⁵ They arrived at Brownsville at 1:50 P.M. and were "escorted" across the bridge by six heavily

²³Ibid.

²⁴El Universal, April 11, 1936.

²⁵Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat, 63; El Universal, April 12, 1936; Townshend, Lazaro Cardenas, 136; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, 416.

armed officers.²⁶ All were fortunate in their punishment; the earlier fate of losers in Mexican politics had been lengthy imprisonment or death.

In Brownsville, General Calles was asked by a New York Times correspondent the reasons for his expulsion from Mexico. The following is part of a dispatch attributing the ejection to his opposition against communism. He and his three companions signed it:

General Calles states that the only responsibility for this situation lies with the government itself, which, for more than a year, has been developing a demagogic policy and has been attempting to implant communism. We have done all in our power as citizens to combat this tendency without violating the law.

The expulsion of the labor leader Morones is due to the wish of the government to destroy the Regional Confederation of Labor (CROM) which does not wish to capitulate to the Communist labor organization that supports the government and is headed by Lombardo Toledano.

The desire of the government, whatever declarations it may make to the contrary, is to socialize the machinery of production, disregarding the private property rights that guarantee our institutions, and to establish a collective system in agriculture similar to the Russian system.

We repudiate communism, as we consider it not adaptable to our country and because the Mexican people refuse to accept it.²⁷

President Cárdenas justified the deportation by declaring that the conditions of the country demanded it. In response to Calles' statement, Cárdenas issued a manifesto which was widely circulated to his startled nation the following day:

²⁶ El Universal, April 11, 1936; El Excelsior, April 11, 1936.

²⁷ New York Times, April 11, 1936.

I desire to depart from the lamentable precedents which exist in the history of our bitter political struggles and in which frequently little value has been placed on the principle of respect for human life. Therefore I consider the circumstances demanded, as imperative for the public welfare, the immediate departure from national territory of General Plutarco Elías Calles...Luis Morones...Luis León...and General Rafael Melchor Ortega.²⁸

At one blow, Calles, leader of the conservative revolution, and Morones, chieftain of the CROM corporations of syndicates of Mexican labor and the major remaining barrier to Lombardo's ambition to rule as undisputed dictator, were removed.

The plane left Brownsville, stopped in San Antonio, then left for Dallas where Calles spent Friday night with his entourage. In San Antonio Calles stated, "...I had nothing to do with the bombing of the Veracruz train. If the government had thought so they would have executed me, not exiled me."²⁹ Calles was met at Los Angeles by his son-in-law, Fernando Torreblanca. Morones, the CROM leader who had been instrumental in shaping labor policy for Obregón and Calles, went to San Diego with Melchor Ortega where he spent a short time before leaving for New York City. Morones' organization asserted that the government deported him without previous investigations of the train derailling and without clarifying the true public responsibility of the incident.³⁰

²⁸El Universal, April 12, 1936.

²⁹"Mexico: solution without blood," Time, April 20, 1936, 25.

³⁰"Reparación justiciera, " C.R.O.M., April 1, 1937, 5.

Calles' son-in-law called Señora Morones telling her of her husband's presence in California. Several weeks later she and Luis Enrique joined Morones in New York City. Morones lived from funds his family sent him during his exile.³¹ According to his son, Morones lived on Riverside Drive in Manhattan, and met expenses by mortgaging one of their Mexican homes and selling various possessions such as furniture and rugs.

Although Morones spoke and understood very little English he was very interested in daily activities of American life. He was an ardent New York Yankee fan and attended many of their home games, ate hotdogs (more than hamburgers), and enjoyed riding the roller coaster at Coney Island. A man of varied interests, Morones could enjoy watching sports one day then attend the Metropolitan Opera the next.³²

Daily activities, however, were not merely confined to hotdogs and the New York Yankees. Morones participated in A.F.L. matters. Two weeks after Morones' expulsion from Mexico he conferred with William Green and presented a report on the "serious conditions" of Mexican affairs. According to Green, "Brother Morones was expelled from Mexico and driven into exile. He was not accorded a trial by a jury of his peers nor was he permitted to face his accusers." Green continued, alleging that "Thirty-nine leaders of the Mexican Federation

³¹José Petricioli, interview, Mexico City, June 25, 1968; Berta Peña Viuda de Morones, interview, Mexico City, August 24, 1968.

³²Luis Enrique Morones Peña, interview, Mexico City, August 24, 1968.

are in prison there, not because they committed crimes against the government but simply because they are known to be labor leaders." The A.F.L. president ended by saying, "All of this is shocking to the sense of justice and fair play so universally held by the officers and members of organized labor in the United States." This naive statement reveals that Green knew little of previous Mexican history and "Mexican justice." Could American "fair play" be applied in Mexico? Green had a simple and uncritical criterion for accepting Morones' report as official and unbiased. The gullible president's reasoning was why should he not accept Morones' report, "It was submitted through labor channels."³³

CROM and C.T.M. hostility continued and the latter sent a telegram to the convention of International Oil Workers meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma on June 1. The C.T.M. objected to Morones' and Calles' attacks on the Cárdenas government made at that conference. Their communique stated that Morones and Calles were expelled from Mexico "for labors tending to repress the just demands of the workers" and for attempting "to establish a Fascist regime." The new Mexican confederation continued its attack by alleging: "The presence of Calles and Morones at a convention of petroleum workers is ironical for the policy of defrauding the Mexican people in

³³All quotes are taken from the New York Times, April 26, 1936. During Morones' exile, Matthew Woll and Chester Wright "opened the doors of their homes to him." "La C.R.O.M. ni se muere ni se rinde," C.R.O.M., November, 1920, 16.

petroleum matters was due to them."³⁴ Verbal attacks were soon supplemented by physical warfare.

Of all the labor conflicts during Cárdenas' administration, perhaps none was more bitter than those occurring in the textile industry, largely because many of them involved inter-union disputes among the affiliates of CROM and C.T.M. Morones feared C.T.M. encroachment in Veracruz, and his fears soon materialized as these C.T.M. intrusions became a great problem. Constant fights for jurisdiction in the textile mills in the State of Veracruz led to murderous warfare ending in scores of deaths between CROM and C.T.M. Feeling ran high, the industry suffered, and Cárdenas' pet idea of a united front for the working class received a decided set-back.

In September, 1936, trouble between the two federations exploded in Atlixco, Puebla. CROM had been supreme there for a number of years, but agitators from the C.T.M. were making gains. Late that month Cárdenas visited Atlixco, assembled leaders from both organizations, and stressed that rivalry and bloodshed must cease. The ten most irreconcilable leaders of each group were ordered to leave the area. An ideal arrangement was formulated. If a laborer belonging to the C.T.M. were murdered, CROM would have to indemnify his family, and vice versa. Practice was divorced from theory in this case, and Morones ordered his lieutenants to refuse the bland agreement.

³⁴New York Times, June 3, 1936.

RETURN TO MEXICO

Since Morones' deportation in April, 1936, CROM's central committee negotiated with Cárdenas for his return. Finally on February 24, 1937, the Mexican Secretary of Interior permitted Morones' return. A "great applause" occurred in CROM's meeting following Ricardo Treviño's announcement of that fact. In March, 1937, newspaper articles in the Federal District press publicly revealed that Morones could return to his homeland. Morones, however, was not summoned to Mexico by Cárdenas to revamp the labor organizations as he and Green alleged in the U.S. According to Lombardo, who had spoken with Cárdenas about the matter, Morones was merely returning protected by the Law of Amnesty, and this neither constituted special permission nor an extraordinary behest on the government's behalf.³⁵ On the other hand, Morones would neither have any of his rights decreased nor be subject to any extra restrictions. Nevertheless, CROM propaganda announced that Morones had "triumphed over the government, justice was being fulfilled."³⁶

Morones, accompanied by his wife and some friends, arrived in Monterrey and declared that he would enter action in the social field, and in the political field by reorganizing the Labor Party.³⁷ On April 29, his caravan which comprised cromistas headed by José López Cortés who drove to meet him, entered the capital. Upon

³⁵Vicente Lombardo Toledano in El Excelsior, April 28, 1937.

³⁶"Reparación justiciera," 5-6.

³⁷La Prensa, April 28, 1937.

Morones' entry into Mexico City, he boldly announced, "I come to resume my activities at the service of the labor organizations."³⁸ He returned at an opportune time since there was a split in the C.T.M. Overestimating their forces in the confederation, the communists had tried to take over in March, and when they failed withdrew their unions.

"THE OIL IS OURS"

Labor troubles had beset oil companies for months as oil field workers demanded better wages. Near the end of 1937 a federally appointed conciliation board told the petroleum companies to raise salaries by 26 million pesos annually. They refused and sought redress in court. Early in March, 1938, the Supreme Court held the companies were bound by the decision and ordered that monies be deposited. Still the companies refused. Cárdenas in a radio address to the Mexican nation, approached the microphone at ten o'clock on the night of March, 19, 1938 and said, "The oil is ours."

In what Nathaniel and Sylvia Weyl have eulogistically called "the reconquest of Mexico." Cárdenas nationalized land, railroads, and ultimately the foreign-owned petroleum industry. His nationalism aimed to promote economic independence, protect Mexican industries, and remedy the conflict long existent between capital, mostly foreign, and labor, mostly Mexican. Morones claimed that Cárdenas called

³⁸In the thirteenth CROM convention José Petricioli presented Morones with a medal from the Sindicato de Dependientes del Comercio del Distrito Federal. The medal symbolized "brotherly love" and was neither gold nor silver "which lacked force and were effeminate," but of iron which represented tenacity. Since Morones had a reputation of being a bon vivant, the historic presentation was a farce. "XIII Gran Convención de la C.R.O.M.," C.R.O.M., September, 1937, 13-16.

Morones to Chapultepec and asked him and Florentino Maya of the CROM central committee for advise, and for the stolen records of the 1926 U.S. "invasion" of Mexico, in order to expose the American petroleum companies' role in plotting the would-be intervention. After Morones consented, Cárdenas never asked for them again; and, according to Morones, "With an air of theatricalism paid indemnities which cost Mexico millions of pesos and many deprivations."³⁹ If the story is true, and it is doubtful, it would have been an excellent opportunity to gain favor with Cárdenas. It would exemplify how CROM, through Morones' efforts, attempted to influence and shape government policy, but failed. When asked by newsmen what he thought of the March 18 expropriation and nationalization of the petroleum companies, Morones stated that his organization supported Cárdenas' actions and considered them perfectly just, but that he was surprised when he read the newspapers on March 19 and discovered the expropriation.⁴⁰

Strife between the C.T.M. and CROM flared again in January, 1938. At midnight of January 16 a twenty-four-hour general strike began in the State of Veracruz. Called by Lombardo as a protest against a presidential ruling several months earlier favoring CROM workers, its purpose was to paralyze Veracruz. Lombardo did not hold free sway. Cárdenas had ruled that CROM workers constituted a majority in the Cocolapan textile factory at Orizaba, and that C.T.M. must leave

³⁹Luis N. Morones in El Universal, March 18, 1957; Luis N. Morones in El Excelsior, September 5, 1953.

⁴⁰Luis N. Morones in El Popular, May 18, 1939; Luis N. Morones in El Universal, March 18, 1957.

that plant for another nearby. The decision followed an altercation between the rival unions in which eight persons were killed and 25 wounded. After the rival unions ignored the president's plea that they "unite for the Revolution," the situation was so serious that Cárdenas hurried there by automobile. Following a sanguinary battle on the 17th, the presence of the Chief Executive, who ordered arms taken from both groups, brought an "armistice" and relative peace to Orizaba. La Prensa was highly critical of Morones' accusing Cárdenas of instigating the agitation which culminated in the loss of lives. According to this press, the workers of the Cocolapan factory had progressed in "tranquil fashion" even though there were cromistas and cetemistas until "Morones arrived in the country and began agitating the situation."⁴¹

CROM SPLIT OF 1938

In the midst of this struggle, CROM was racked by "fifth column" pressures. Since unity and the appearance of unity are essential ingredients in a political formula for group effectiveness, most politically-orientated groups are careful to reveal as little as possible concerning internecine struggles. Such action did not characterize Morones' CROM in 1938 when its "Old Guard" experienced a major split. Morones had returned from exile under a general amnesty issued by Cárdenas in April, 1937, but remained a staunch

⁴¹La Prensa, January 23, 1938.

enemy of the president. Cárdenas was in the process of forming a new governmental political party and CROM leadership disagreed about whether CROM should support Cárdenas or follow Morones' dictates to revive the P.L.M. and prevent the organization from cooperating with the government.

Another reason for the leadership's dispute was the inter-union struggle caused by internal jockeying for supremacy between the old Morones clique and leaders with a different orientation. The night of January 8 Morones claimed at the Hidalgo Theatre that, "Perhaps none of the labor organizations that now exist in Mexico have been attacked as much as the C.R.O.M., but the C.R.O.M. has been able to exist because of its members' discipline." Events soon disproved his statement concerning CROM solidarity. Eduardo Moneda, José López Córtes, and Eduardo Buenrostro delivered a letter to the El Nacional office on January 15 stating that they advocated loyal and sincere cooperation with Cárdenas' actions. They disagreed with Morones' conduct and announced that "no division exists in the CROM and the actions of the ex-CROM leader ought to be taken as those of one single member."⁴²

According to the C.R.O.M. Memoria, a Morones organ, Ricardo Treviño's treason to the confederation dated from 1936 when he served as the central committee's secretary general. When Morones was exiled, Treviño "considered it an opportune time to become CROM's only director" and disregarded other opinions. With Morones' return.

⁴²El Nacional, January 16, 1938.

Treviño and his following "refused to rectify their ways, continued to create distrust against Morones," and tried to expel him from the confederation he had founded. The C.R.O.M. Memoria alleged that Treviño and his allies received aid "from those they should have not been receiving it." Another charge leveled at Treviño was the "disappearance" of five thousand pesos of the union's funds.⁴³

The split was formalized in April, 1938, when the Morones-dominated national committee expelled Treviño's following from CROM. Among cromistas ousted were Treviño, Eduardo Moneda, José López Córtes, Juan Lozano Padilla, and Mario Suárez. Some of these men had participated in CROM's founding; Treviño, Moneda, and López Córtes had served in the Grupo Acción for 20 years.

The expelled group also called itself "CROM" and looked upon itself as labor's legitimate representative. The Treviño CROM devoted much of its energy to exposing the corruption of Morones' clique; moronistas retaliated with documentary evidence to prove that these rivals were corrupt and were subsidized by the federal government. During Cárdenas' administration a principal CROM activity consisted of inter-union fights between the Treviño and Morones factions. But when not fighting each other, they engaged in bloody struggles with the C.T.M. for jurisdiction of the textile mills.

⁴³On August 5, 1938, Morones presented "copious documentation" to the general assembly. This consisted of receipts from the central committee's treasury. A segment of this evidence was a receipt of Blanca Rubín, cashier of the central committee, which said that Treviño "took" 4,475 pesos from the treasury. C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1937-1939, 174. See pages 181-186 for itemized accounts of Treviño's alleged graft.

Despite the fact that the once-powerful CROM had dwindled, Morones maintained the fiction that his CROM was still potentially powerful. He, Reynaldo Torres, Juan Fonseca, and Fernando Rodarte were invited to participate in the meeting of the Confederación de Sindicatos Obreros y Campesinos de Puebla on November 21, 1938, to celebrate the 28th anniversary of the Revolution. Morones' speech at the factory "La Económica," contained this gem of propaganda, "Despite all the attacks, I have never doubted that the C.R.O.M. would resurge, that we would triumph, and be the true guide of the labor movement."⁴⁴ Rivalry continued and when anti-Morones CROM elements in Río Blanco began a sitdown strike on Saturday, March 16, 1940, the Morones union consequently refused to cooperate with them.

In September, 1938, Lombardo Toledano convened a labor congress to create an international Latin American labor federation. Thirty-seven delegates from the more important Latin American labor unions of twelve countries attended. The C.T.M. took the lead to found the Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina in September, 1938 in Mexico City. Lombardo, the leading figure in setting up the C.T.A.L., was elected president, and shaped its policies during its formative years.

⁴⁴"Los logreros y traidores, son los que hablan de revolucionarismo," C.R.O.M., December, 1938, 9, 16. According to Petricioli, Morones revised his definition of them as "traitors" to that of "separatists." Petricioli was describing Morones "qualities of forgiveness" in his later years. Interview, Mexico City, June 30, 1968.

ELECTION OF 1940 AND THE MORIBUND P.A.F.L.

The founding of the C.T.A.L. helped influence Morones and the A.F.L. to "reinvigorate" the P.A.F.L. Matthew Woll, vice-president of the A.F.L., and Chester Wright arrived in Mexico City in October, 1938 for "a visit of observation" for the A.F.L. executive council. Only one hope actually remained for the A.F.L. if it wished to rejuvenate the P.A.F.L. in Mexico: could Morones spring back into power?

General Juan Andrew Almazán believed he had the natural right to the presidency because he was the highest-ranking officer in the army. Almazán expected to receive serious consideration from the P.R.M., but when the official party ignored him, he joined the opposition. Encouraged by generals opposed to Manuel Avila Camacho, business and landowner interests opposed to Cárdenas' radical policies, Morones' CROM, and certain elements of the Catholic Church, Almazán, on June 30, 1939, resigned his post as commander of the Seventh Military Zone in Monterrey. One month later Almazán launched his presidential campaign with a manifesto offering positive and specific advantages to the army, capital, Church, labor and peasantry. Morones' CROM through its satellite organ, the P.L.M., endorsed the general hoping to pick up a few crumbs from the victor's table.

Morones' gamble failed. Almazán was unsuccessful; Avila Camacho's main strength came from organized labor, CROM excepted. When the defeated general refused to raise the banner of armed revolt to nullify the official electoral count, he was politically dead; so was Morones' and the A.F.L.'s hopes to revive the waning P.A.F.L.

Shortly after his election Avila Camacho publicly declared "Soy creyente" (I am a believer), and thus placated many Mexican Catholics who might have supported any rebellion against him. Furthermore, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent Vice-President Henry A. Wallace to attend the inauguration; and although Wallace was harassed by a pro-Axis mob shouting "Death to the gringos," Almazán realized that insurrection would be hopeless. After the general's electoral defeat, Morones, his "fair weather" ally, showed his true colors in an effortless about face when he attacked the general and attributed Almazán's defeat "exclusively to himself."⁴⁵

After the 1940 election Morones tried to revive the A.F.L.'s interest in the P.A.F.L., but his attempts received little attention. Still the P.A.F.L. was not dissolved. The offices of treasurer and English and Spanish secretaries were combined and given to Matthew Woll, although he knew no Spanish. At the last A.F.L. convention held before the United States entered World War II, there was a spiritless discussion of the P.A.F.L. It was clear to everyone that the organization had practically died with Santiago Iglesias in 1939, Almazán's defeat provided the coup de grâce.

The sixth P.A.F.L. congress was to be held in Havana but the depression and insufficient funds made reorganization a hopeless task.

⁴⁵Casasola, Historia gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana, IV, 2447. Morones' endorsed Gustavo Casasola's multivolume history "como un documento de verdadera importancia y como una exacta contribución a la Historia de nuestro País; especialmente en su época convulsiva." Morones to Casasola, January 9, 1948, Historia gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana, IV, 2333.

With CROM's influence on the Mexican government virtually nil, the A.F.L.'s interest in retaining close connections quickly diminished. There was little the A.F.L. or CROM could gain from continuing close relations with each other, and contacts between the two movements rapidly dwindled to little more than occasional ritualistic appearances of delegates at each other conventions. Nevertheless, the significant international position which Morones' CROM occupied was that of a trail-blazer among the incipient Pan-American labor movements.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Philip Taft in his The A.F. of L. in the Times of Gompers believes Gompers' death was the greatest factor contributing to the P.A.F.L.'s decline, because he had been its prime support and inspiration. Whether one accepts Taft's thesis or not, it cannot be denied that the death of Morones' intimate and mutual-admiring friend, was a severe blow to the Federation.

CHAPTER X

MORONES AND PERONISM

Having failed to support a successful presidential candidate in 1940, Morones endorsed Miguel Alemán's election. During Alemán's administration, 1946-52, the name of the governmental party was changed to Partido Revolucionario Institucional, but the basic form was maintained. Therefore, unsuccessful in his efforts to augment his prestige and power by conventional methods, Morones tried another tactic -- support from Argentina's Chief Executive.

PERON'S LABOR POLICY

One of Juan Domingo Perón's power bases was the working class or descamisados (shirtless ones). His justicialismo doctrine stressed political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice. Prior to Perón's ascendancy, the labor movement played an insignificant role in Argentine affairs. He raised wages, established collective bargaining, set up housing projects, renovated social security, and reorganized the Argentine C.G.T. Through overtones to Morones, he attempted to extend his influence into Mexico.

LIMA INTER-AMERICAN TRADE UNION CONFERENCE

In 1947, several South American labor groups wrote the A.F.L. requesting closer unity with the North American labor movement. The A.F.L. assigned Serafino Romualdi, a Spanish-speaking Italian immigrant to the United States who had been active in the International Ladies'

Garment Workers' Union, to work on this project. Largely as a result of the efforts of Romualdi and of Bernardo Ibañez, President of the Chilean Confederation of Labor, several South American labor organizations agreed to an A.F.L.-sponsored Pan-American labor conference in 1948.

On January 10, the Lima Inter-American Trade Union Conference began its sessions in the main assembly hall of the House of Representatives with delegations present from the United States, Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, Colombia, Dutch Guiana, Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Panama, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Ecuador. All commissions had full powers except those from the Dominican Republic and Venezuela which were represented by fraternal delegations, and Ecuador, which only sent observers. The conference's objectives were to analyze the situation of the workers' movement in the Western Hemisphere, study methods of collaboration, raise the standard of living, and promote human liberty and social progress.¹

CROM secretary general Morones, having been a leading figure in the P.A.F.L., could not resign himself to play a secondary role in the establishing of another inter-American labor group. Morones attended this conference with his own plan to organize the confederation. At the beginning of the conference, an Argentine delegate charged that the A.F.L. representatives were financed by the United States State Department. Morones rose, began speaking, and expressed the

¹C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1947-1949, 32.

antecedents of the Argentine case; the conflicts, difficulties, and misunderstanding created by Romauldi's "awkward politics." Sabroso, President of the Congress, interrupted Morones stating that "only ten minutes is allowed to the speakers and your time has expired."

Morones quickly retorted that the ruling had been approved without the knowledge of all present and that the members had agreed that important matters would have no time limit. Morones emphasized the "importance" of his topic and continued his delivery. He accused Romauldi, "an agent of the State Department," and the A.F.L. of supplying money for the Lima Conference. He repeated, "There are delegates in this hall who have been bought by Romauldi." Romauldi denied the allegation and stated Morones had no right to suppose that the conference was instigated by the United States government.²

CROM maintained that it had documentary proof that Romauldi was a United States government agent, and Petricioli showed this evidence to Professor Alexander in August, 1948. It is a letter of introduction for Romauldi written by Adolf Berle to Ambassador Messersmith in Argentina (written in the summer of 1946, after Berle had ceased having any part in the government). This correspondence mentions Romauldi's war services in the Coordinator's office, and relates that he is "well looked upon" by the American government. The damaging portion in CROM's opinion is Berle's statement that a

²Ibid., 59, 95. Serafino Romauldi, Presidents and Peons: Recollections of a Labor Ambassador in Latin America (New York, 1967), 78. This work is a personal and first-hand account of twenty years' service by a key A.F.L. representative in Latin America.

number of people, mainly communists, had been going to Latin America, alleging they represented United States labor, so Berle suggested to A.F.L. leaders that they appoint an official representative. As a result, Romauldi was named; this is why Morones and CROM considered Romauldi an official agent.³

In the Lima Conference the worst criticism of the United States came from a man who admittedly had contacted the Argentine Embassy in Mexico City before his going to Peru -- Luis N. Morones. Morones charged that the A.F.L. report of March, 1947, which damned the Argentine Labor Confederation as being Perón's tool, was made in bad faith and resulted from the maneuvering by Romauldi, Latin American representative of the A.F.L. and key man on the commission of inquiry that visited Buenos Aires in 1947. Morones thus blamed Romauldi for having "rigged the conference just as Romauldi had rigged the A.F.L. condemnation of Argentine labor a year ago."⁴

³Robert J. Alexander interview of José Petricioli, Mexico City, August 27, 1948. Romauldi died of a heart attack in 1967 while serving in Mexico City as a consultant for the State Department and as a lecturer at Cuernavaca Labor College. A.F.L.-C.I.O. News, November 18, 1967.

⁴New York Times, January 26, 1948. In 1947, Perón attempted to endear himself to U.S. labor by inviting A.F.L. leaders to visit Argentina and observe the freedom of his trade unions. After the visit the American delegation published its findings that Argentine labor was dictatorially controlled by Perón's government through such measures as armed forces, bribery, and expulsion. New York Times, March 10, 1947. Morones accused Romauldi of having gone to Buenos Aires with A.F.L. officials not only to investigate the Argentine labor movement, but all of Perón's acts for which Romauldi had to flee to Montevideo. C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1947-1949, 56-57. Born in the province of Perugia in Italy, Romauldi was forced to leave that country in 1923, at age 23, because of his active opposition to Benito Mussolini's dictatorship -- this background helped formulate his opposition to the fascistic Perón regime and Morones' defense of it.

A five-nation "Committee of Honor," which resulted from Morones' denunciations, unanimously rejected all of Morones' charges against Romauldi at the conference's final session on July 14. The convention hailed the commission's findings in which there was no positive response to Morones' emotionally-based appeal. A defeated minority of one, Morones chose to abandon the conference rather than compromise or accept humiliating defeat. He neither appeared before the Committee of Honor when summoned, nor attended the final plenary session.⁵ As a result, Morones' name was stricken from the list of accredited delegates following his departure.⁶

VISIT TO BUENOS AIRES

According to Petricioli, Morones had not intended to go to Argentina, but that country's delegation invited CROM to send "someone" to Argentina. Morones was given a "hero's welcome" and following a two hour audience with President Perón, Morones was the guest of honor at an Argentine Labor Confederation rally held in Buenos Aires' Luna Park on January 23, 1948. Following the speech of Juan Barreiro, a C.G.T. official who opened the ceremony, Morones began his discourse by attacking Romauldi, "a propagandist against Argentina." He spoke on the general theme of "imperialist"

⁵ Milton Bracker in the New York Times, January 14, 1948; Serafino Romauldi, "Action at Lima," American Federationist, LV (February, 1948), 25. Romauldi summarized the situation writing, "May I add, modesty aside, that I received a standing ovation and, in typical Latin American fashion, I was embraced by many." Romauldi, Presidents and Peons, 78.

⁶ American Federationist, February, 1948, 25.

attempts to infiltrate and manipulate the Latin American working masses. Morones assailed Assistant Secretary of State Spruille Braden,⁷ and declared that he had been branded "a liar" at Lima "only because I dared to impugn the reputation of a member of the United States delegation." He boasted that it had been "an honor to defend the honor of the workers' movement of Argentina."⁸ The meeting with Perón added credence to the circumstantial evidence and proved to those who suspected that Perón and Morones had schemed in advance to disrupt the Lima Conference.

ORGANIZATION OF THE C.I.T.

One of the important results of the Lima Conference was the organization of the Inter-American Confederation of Workers (C.I.T.), of which the Chilean Bernardo Ibañez was elected president in 1948.

⁷Two weeks before the Argentine presidential election of February 24, 1946, the U.S. State Department published its 131-page "Blue Book on Argentina," the work of Braden and his staff. It gave what it termed "incontrovertible evidence," much of it drawn from recently captured German documents, that "the present Argentine Government and many of its high officials were so seriously compromised with the (Nazi-Fascist) enemy that trust and confidence could not be reposed in that government." Perón himself was prominent among those against whom such testimony was presented. The "Blue Book" gained Perón more votes than it lost him, for it was a fresh and flagrant example of United States intervention in Latin America which Argentines had long taken the lead in opposing. Arthur P. Whitaker, "The Election of February 24, 1946: Braden or Perón: Second Phase," in Why Perón came to Power. The Background to Peronism in Argentina, ed. by Joseph R. Barager (New York, 1968), 221-222.

⁸New York Times, January 26, 1948. Morones' speech eulogized Eva "as an example for all women and for America's first ladies." Morones was followed by Angel Cofiño García, secretary general of the Cuban Federation of Workers who had missed the Lima Conference, but attested that had he been there "he would have adopted Morones' attitude." La Prensa (Buenos Aires), January 24, 1948.

Despite Morones' actions in Lima and Buenos Aires, Petricioli told Professor Alexander that "the CROM is not peronista," except that CROM believed that the "international labor organizations in the Americas should not be directed by the United States State Department and its agents in the C.I.T." One of the purposes in creating C.I.T., an organization of non-communist trade unions, was to terminate the communist-orientated C.T.A.L. Lombardo had created ten years earlier. The second C.I.T. congress which met in Havana in 1949, refused Morones' demand that his CROM become an affiliate; CROM soon afterwards allied with Argentina's C.G.T.⁹

The C.I.T., a union of paper affiliates and lineal descendent of the P.A.N.L., failed to prosper and was liquidated in 1952 after the formation of the world-wide International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Its member organizations joined with several which had not belonged to the C.I.T. to form the Organización Regional Inter-Americana de Trabajadores (O.R.I.T.).

INVITATION TO THE PERONISTS

Peronists caused considerable disorder at the January, 1951 meeting in Mexico City which organized the American affiliate of O.R.I.T. Argentina, Panama, and the Dominican Republic were not invited to the conference because O.R.I.T. directors in Brussels assumed that these countries lacked "democratic trade unions free

⁹Alba, Historia del movimiento obrero en América Latina, 471.

from government control."¹⁰ CROM, however, favored admitting the Argentine C.G.T., and Morones took independent responsibility for a belated cable inviting the Argentine Labor Federation to send delegates. On January 9, three C.G.T. leaders after a last-minute conference with Perón, left Buenos Aires to fly to Mexico City in response to Morones' strategy of issuing an unexpected invitation the previous day. A dispute about whether the Argentine delegates who arrived January 10 should be allowed to participate threatened to disrupt the conference before it could form a Western Hemisphere branch of the I.C.F.T.U. The Argentine group with Morones' assistance, almost managed to enter the meeting hall, but only the timely intervention of the chairman prevented a clash with a group of delegates who rushed toward the door to block their entrance. Morones, a member of the United Labor Committee who handled local preparations for the conference, announced his CROM would not only withdraw if the Argentine delegation was refused admission, but would hold a separate protest meeting.¹¹ In reality, this was an empty gesture. Morones was in no position to adopt strong measures. His role was more negative than positive.

¹⁰New York Times, January 11, 1951.

¹¹Ibid. When Morones' term as CROM secretary general terminated in 1949 he was designated as permanent advisor and councilor and Secretary of International Affairs of CROM, positions he exercised until his death in 1964. Cromistas felt they "had" to consult Morones during this period because of his vast experience and knowledge. Fernando M. Lluck, interview, Acapulco, March 29, 1971.

After a bitter debate, the delegates refused to seat the peronistas. Only CROM which had summoned the Argentines without the consent of the I.C.F.T.U. secretary general, voted to admit the C.G.T. Jacob Potofsky, head of the Latin American Affairs Committee of the C.I.O., and George Meany led the fight against accepting the Argentines; they were vigorously seconded by the A.F.L. representatives who agreed that the C.G.T. did not constitute "a truly free labor organization." Both American organizations stated that the basic principles and policies of the I.C.F.T.U. were opposed to totalitarianism.¹² Morones' attempt to sneak the three peronistas in through "the back door" had failed. He vigorously denounced "United States maneuvers to dominate the conference" which would prevent Mexico from electing a president of the hemisphere body and establishing its headquarters in Mexico City.

Following Morones' announcement that meetings would be held the following week to hear the Argentine case, CROM representatives walked out in protest. The peronistas were the chief speakers at a reunion where the platform was shared with cromistas. A photograph in the archives of La Prensa in Mexico City shows Morones, Moisés Calleja, Florentino Maya, and several other cromistas at a banquet given on January 12 for Isaías Santin, secretary general of the Argentine C.G.T., José Erriole, and Félix Odorigo, two other peronistas.

¹²La Prensa (Buenos Aires), January 11, 1951; William P. Carney in the New York Times, January 12, 1951.



Courtesy La Prensa

CROM BANQUET HONORING ARGENTINE C.G.T. OFFICIALS, JANUARY 12, 1951

When the C.G.T. representatives were ready to return to Argentina they encouraged a large number of Mexican trade unionists to accompany them. Rigoberto Gonzáles and Florentino Maya accepted for CROM. In Buenos Aires they were feted at dinners and receptions, visited the Eva Perón Foundation, and made the customary tour of Argentina. Upon returning to Mexico, they published a long and detailed letter in La Prensa. This propaganda aid to peronistas praised Perón, Eva, and the Argentine economic situation. The exchange of visits accelerated Morones' and Argentine efforts to solidify Argentine-Mexican ties to support a new Latin American labor organization.

The Morones-Perón flirtation of "brothers in purpose and colleagues in fact" did not go unmentioned in Mexico City after the visits. Beginning in January, 1952, Jorge Prieto Laurens published in the capitoline Todo a series of articles and a letter Morones allegedly sent to Perón offering his services to implant justicialismo in Mexico. Morones and Petricioli responded by presenting an accusation before the Procurador de Justicia of the Federal District which charged Prieto Laurens with falsification of documents.

Morones' long-range design to swing Mexico into the column of the Argentine-led "Third Force" countries in the event of a world war, came to light in a strange document, a photostatic copy purported to be a letter from Morones to Perón dated March 3, 1952. This correspondence which covered twenty single-spaced typewritten



Courtesy La Prensa

CROM DELEGATION ARRIVES IN ASUNCION, PARAGUAY, FEBRUARY, 1952

Back row: María Teresa del Valle de Morones, Hector Cerrillo.
Front row: Luis N. Morones, Federico Governatore, Jesús Corona.

pages, contained a careful analysis of the Mexican political situation, plans for establishing the peronista theory of government in Mexico, and a request for Argentine funds. The dominant theme was an anti-United States feeling:

In order to spread our anti-Yankee position, we have been cooperating with the native Stalinist Communists. This is the only thing on which we agree with the Communists. Otherwise we are quietly fighting them and pushing them out of their positions of influence.¹³

DEATH OF EVITA

A few months after Perón established his own international labor union Morones flew to Argentina in the summer of 1952; Evita Perón, whose magnetic charm had captured audiences Perón could not reach and the heroine of thousands of "shirtless ones," had died of cancer. Morones and his second wife attended the funeral in Buenos Aires on July 26, 1952. Morones rendered homage at Eva's burial in the name of CROM, stood over her coffin during her capilla ardiente (wake), and placed flowers at the foot of her casket. Symbolically, Morones deposited a small chest of Mexican soil in Argentina, and carried some Argentine earth to his homeland.¹⁴

A.T.I.A.S

Consistent with the justicialist philosophy of the Third Position which stressed Latin Americanism and combatted Pan-Americanism, Perón

¹³New York Times, December 8, 1952.

¹⁴C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1951-1953, 241, 249.

decided to create his own inter-American body. In November, 1952, CROM co-sponsored the Perón-dominated Latin American Association of Trade Unionists.¹⁵ An overture on November 24, 1952 from the communist-dominated C.T.A.L. to join forces in the fight against "imperialism" received cold treatment from A.T.L.A.S. United States and Latin American labor officials who did not attend the congress branded it as an Argentine attempt to spread anti-Americanism through as many Latin American unions as it could influence. José Espejo, Perón's ex-Secretary of Labor, announced at the opening meeting that the organization would be anti-capitalistic, anti-communistic, and dedicated to maintaining the "independence of Latin American workers." It therefore came as a surprise when Lombardo Toledano, head of the C.T.A.L., sent a formal "fraternal salute" and invited the new organization to formulate a basis for common action. Morones explained that Lombardo was absent from the conference because he was deliberately not invited, and emphasized that "there could under no circumstances be any understanding with Señor Lombardo because of his known communist connections." In his formal speech Morones also charged the United States with "colonial oppression" of Latin American workers.¹⁶ CROM was the only important Mexican

¹⁵See John Terrill Deiner, "ATLAS: A Labor Instrument of Argentine Expansionism Under Perón" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1969), for a detailed study of various A.T.L.A.S. activities, an evaluation of A.T.L.A.S. contributions to peronista foreign policy, and an examination of its impact on labor organizations in Latin America.

¹⁶New York Times, November 24, 1952.

federation in attendance, and by far the largest and most important contingent non-Mexican federation at the constituent congress was the Argentine C.G.T.; no other major Latin American country sent delegates.

A.T.L.A.S. was only strong in Argentina and exerted little influence in the workers' movement of other Latin American countries where peronistas never accomplished more than making a few contacts and distributing a lot of Peronist propaganda. Never powerful, A.T.L.A.S. became little more than a paper organization after the Argentine dictator's fall in 1955.

John Deiner, one of Robert J. Alexander's students, concludes that A.T.L.A.S., which was a part of Perón's propaganda apparatus, primarily failed because it was obviously an organization oriented to Argentine interests rather than to those of Latin American trade unionists. Morones, though willing to work with the Argentines, geared his efforts toward Mexican affairs, rather than toward the promulgation of Peronist ideology. CROM and C.G.T. were the only national organizations which ever contributed financial support, and CROM's donations were insignificant. In 1924, death deprived Morones of Samuel Gompers, his chief ally in a foreign country; thirty years later a coup d' état achieved the same results with Perón.

CHAPTER XI

MORONES AND COMMUNISM

The majority of Latin American trade unions in the early twentieth century were either socialist or anarcho-syndicalist, except in Mexico where CROM, the dominant labor group of that period, had a political orientation of its own. Morones' CROM has been peculiarly politically minded and not only have communists and anarchists made little inroads into it, but it has taken a strong position against communism. One factor partly explaining this "immunity" to communism is the fact that CROM was well-established before the Communist International, founded in 1919, had extended beyond the borders of Russia.

Morones abandoned anarcho-syndicalist doctrines which had dominated the thinking of earlier Mexican labor leaders, and adopted a socialist philosophy "adapted to Mexican conditions." This socialism contended that society was divided into two classes, the "exploited and the exploiters." It held that the exploited class consisted largely of manual workers who possessed the right to declare class war in order to secure economic and spiritual betterment, and in the end complete liberation from "capitalist tyranny."¹

¹ Morones distinguished between socialism and syndicalism. He conceived of socialism as being an egalitarian doctrine; socialism is the "idea" and syndicalism, the "action." In the Chamber of Deputies, Morones, a deputy representing Tacubaya, stated, "In the tribune I have declared that the thesis we must defend is the application of the

In November, 1918, Morones and his associates conferred with Samuel Gompers and other A.F.L. leaders at Nuevo Laredo. Labor representatives from other nations were present, and the P.A.F.L. was established with Gompers as president and Morones later becoming vice-president. This first congress was one of organization primarily, but it managed to touch upon all the purposes for which the Federation was founded, especially the fight against "missionary" communism. As would be expected, communistic labor elements in Mexico criticized this "imperialistic American" association.

A socialist congress meeting the following September was torn by dissension over several major issues. Representatives of the Socialist Workers' Party, which Morones had organized; and well-known leftists such as José Allen and Manabrenda Nath Roy, an Indian nationalist, were present. The desire of the congress to establish a political party of the proletariat was frustrated because of the divergent tendencies among the delegates. Some wanted to create a communist party within the International Communist Movement while others like Morones and Samuel Yúdico strenuously objected to this proposal. This resulted in the establishing of two parties. The first, the Partido Comunista de México, was established by José Allen and his colleagues in September, 1919; the second, Morones' P.L.M., was founded three months later and functioned in Mexico's

Revolutionary criterion." Diario de los debates de la Cámara de Diputados, August 27, 28, 1924. As one can see, this is a vague remark typical of a Mexican politician where it was not feasible to oppose the Revolution.

"democratic" political system.

Morones toured Europe following his participation in the P.A.F.L.'s founding. The soviet foreign office began its dealings with Morones before Mexico diplomatically recognized the U.S.S.R. Because of CROM's ties with the A.F.L., Pravda published several anti-CROM articles. Therefore, when Morones appeared at the Russian legation in Berlin he was refused a visa to visit Russia. This angered him. Furthermore, other CROM leaders who later entered Russia were ignored or shown only minor consideration.

When Calles assumed office he recognized the Soviet Union. Several factors influenced his decision. First, Russia was a possible market for Mexican henequén and other products. Second, as president-elect, Calles had gone to Europe where he was received with great distinction, and military parades and other gestures, especially in Germany. Returning via the United States Calles was practically ignored; thus, one reason for Calles' recognition of the soviet government was his desire to irritate the United States government for its slight. Soviet Minister Petskovsky blundered in Mexico by criticizing CROM as being a "reactionary organization opposed to the true interests of the workers and peasants of Mexico." Morones was further angered when the soviet railroad federation sent money to a rival organization's strike fund during a railroad strike. Though the donations were technically sent by the railroad workers, Morones believed that no money could be dispatched from the Soviet Union

without the full approval of that government.²

After a brief flirtation with the Russians in the early 1920's, CROM leadership was forced to choose between cultivating close relations with them or with the A.F.L. It was obvious that the A.F.L. could not consider an organization which had close relations with soviet labor unions as an ally. The A.F.L. openly admitted that its cordial relations with CROM had been possible because of the anti-communistic nature of that organization. Their reasoning is revealed by the following:

The fact that the Mexican Federation of Labor is officially connected with the AFL should be enough to indicate that it is not a communistic movement... If the Mexican Federation of Labor itself or its leaders were believers in the system which has brought so much wreckage, destruction, and suffering in Russia instead of being affiliated with the AFL, they would have affiliated themselves with the Red International.³

In fact, CROM adopted a reciprocal resolution to oppose all attacks

²The Third Congress of the Mexican Communist Party was held in April, 1925. The meeting attacked CROM and pledged the communists to expose CROM leaders "as paid agents of the government and instruments of American imperialism in Mexico," and to "campaign against their sowing of divisions in labor's ranks, their attacks against the independent unions not affiliated with them, their betrayal of all strikes against American capital, their class collaboration and anti-strike theories and their servility to the government." Robert J. Alexander, Communism in Latin America (New Brunswick, 1957), 323-324.

³John P. Frey, "Trade Unions and the Civil War in Mexico," American Federationist, 1924, 303-308. The State Department, on the other hand, persisted that "Relations with Russia are being fostered through the medium of direct representatives, the present one being Luis Morones." Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, Summerlin to Hughes, February 20, 1923, 812.20211/6.

which the A.F.L.'s enemies undertook against it in Mexico.⁴ CROM also refused to seat a communist delegate in its sixth convention held in Ciudad Juárez, November 17-21, 1924.

Green wrote Morones telling him that he was gratified at the Mexican's refusal to affiliate with the Russians as long as the A.F.L. held aloof.⁵ Green issued various statements that Morones and his CROM were staunch defenders against communism -- this constituted "CROM's clean bill of health." When charges were raised in the United States Congress that Morones and Robert Haberman were Bolsheviks, the A.F.L. was ready to defend them with all honesty and a skillful public relations program. In July, 1925, the A.F.L. Information and Publicity Service issued a statement defending Morones and denying that he was a communist. A portion stated:

The unwarranted charge made against Mr. Morones that he is a Communist is most unjust. There is not scintilla of truth in the charges. Those who make them know better. But they are published for the effect it will have on the people of the United States.⁶

⁴A.F. of L. Encyclopedia and Reference Book, III, Part 2, 1593.

⁵Green to Morones, November 19, 1925 in Levenstein, "The United States Labor Movement and Mexico, 1910-1951," 178-179. The A.F.L. was significant because of the support it was able to arouse in the United States for the Mexican Revolution, and because it was able to counteract pressure in the United States favoring armed intervention in Mexico. Informing Secretary of State Kellogg of the American labor movement's efforts to better conditions in Mexico, Green wrote, "As you know, no other group of American citizens has done more to make possible a situation under which constructive development is possible than the American labor movement." U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, Green to Kellogg, June 15, 1925, 711.12/552.

⁶U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, February 15, 1926, 711.12/695.

Mexican affairs and recent Mexican-American relations attracted considerable discussion at the Fifth P.A.F.L. Congress which opened July 18, 1927 in Washington. Morones indirectly answered recent charges that Mexico was "Red" when he denied that any country affiliated with the P.A.F.L. found "inspiration in Russian quarters." He asserted that "propaganda" to that effect had been circulated by unspecified "enemies" of organized labor, and that it had spread just as this congress assembled in an effort to discredit its deliberations and conclusions.⁷ The P.A.F.L.'s executive council's reports denied that CROM was communistic, and at the closing of the congress the Mexican Federation of Labor was commended for its resistance to the "overt and insidious activities of the communist propagandists."⁸

In September, 1925, Morones was interviewed in Washington and New York by industrialists and journalists regarding possible communistic tendencies in the Mexican Labor Party. Morones declared that while there were a "few" individual communists in Mexico, they had no party and were not recognized by CROM. He claimed that organized Mexican labor was an intelligent movement for social betterment, anti-communistic in form, and had improved not only the wages of the laboring class, but also its food, clothing, homes, and education. In this Waldorf Astoria interview, Morones remarked that Bolshevism

⁷New York Times, July 19, 1927.

⁸Charles W. Hackett, "Mexican Government frees imprisoned Catholics," Current History, XXVI (September, 1927), 959.

had been grossly exaggerated in Mexico, especially regarding his connection with it. He pointed out that each time he crossed the United States he had always been carefully examined by American immigration authorities, and concluded that "Bolshevism has the same chance in Mexico as it has here which makes it rather insignificant."⁹

There was little danger of communism in Mexico in the 1920's, for the Revolution was too ardently nationalistic to fall under foreign domination. Nevertheless, the State Department was vehemently opposed to anything which savored of Bolshevism; and the occasionally violent utterances of Mexican officials, which were in reality intended for home consumption, usually in order to allay the discontent caused by their failure to do anything "revolutionary," were taken seriously in the U.S. Even when CROM was engaged in warfare with the extreme leftist elements, Secretary of State Kellogg accused that labor confederation of having intimate relations with the Russian communists.

The State Department and Ambassador Sheffield in particular were convinced that Morones and numerous individuals surrounding him were communists, radicals, or "agents." Guilt by association became the criterion. By this standard, Robert Hammond Murray, a one-time correspondent for the New York World and translator of Calles' public documents and public addresses, was an "agent for the Mexican government" in the "employ of the office of the president at a fixed monthly stipend."¹⁰ According to Sheffield, Frank Tannenbaum was:

⁹New York Times, September 2, 1925.

¹⁰U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, February 15, 1926, 711.12/695.

...far more Mexican in sympathy than he is American, a dangerous man for American interests, apparently a believer in the personal destiny of Morones. He is a graduate of Columbia, a Phi Beta Kappa man, with a distorted view of society and government.¹¹

Wilbur Bates accused Ernest Gruening of being a radical, professional propagandist, and Calles' press agent in the United States.¹² Sheffield also commented on Gruening, "an American citizen having close relations with President Calles" who "cancelled" an informal meeting between Calles and Sheffield because of his "indiscretion" in prematurely releasing information to journalists.¹³ Gruening was also "a Phi Beta Kappa man" and the State Department seems convinced that these "extremists" served as Morones' men. In its crusade against Bolshevism, the State Department discovered J.H. Retinger, Morones' first biographer, who was described in 1926, the year he published his Morones of Mexico, as "a German radical," and an agent for the Mexican government who had been "on the payroll of Morones for years."¹⁴ Robert Haberman,

¹¹Ibid., Sheffield to Kellogg, February 16, 1926, 711.12/685.

¹²Ibid., February 15, 1926, 711.12/695.

¹³Ibid., December 19, 1925, 711.12/658; December 23, 1925, 711.12/660. Gruening evaluated the American Ambassador when he wrote, "...Sheffield was a hopeless reactionary and his attitude was that of a small group surrounding him in Mexico in the Twenties, and he equated association with Mexicans as treason to the United States." Gruening to Buford, April 16, 1970, L.S.U. Archives.

¹⁴U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, February 15, 1926, 711.12/695. While in Mexico, a lack of funds caused Retinger to accept employment as interpreter for Morones, head of the Departamento de Fabriles. Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, February 12, 1926, 812.20211/18.

Morones' interpreter and liason agent between Morones and Samuel Gompers, was an "American draft jumper" who escaped to Yucatan and "made himself conspicuous in that state and Mexico as a Bolshevik and radical propagandist."¹⁵

The United States Embassy in Mexico City frequently received "reliable information" concerning communism from unnamed Americans. Some was forwarded on October 21, 1925, and contained an alleged conversation between Morones and one of his intimate friends who held a lucrative position in his department. "The intimate" is unidentified as is the source of the information, except that his memorandum was prepared by "a reliable American." The passage is worth quoting in length because it illustrates the type reports the State Department received. Morones is supposed to have stated that:

he had just had his most successful journey to the U.S.; that he had the Soviet propaganda going finely in the U.S., with good organizations in New York, Chicago, Denver, and other cities; that he fooled the Americans he met by denying that he had Bolshevik sympathies; that many people of various nationalities are arriving in increasing numbers, principally through Tampico

¹⁵Wilbur Bates to Department of State, January 4, 1926, 812.5000.152 in U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, February 15, 1926, 711.12/695. Sheffield wrote, "I learn from a well-informed American newspaper source that certain foreigners in the pay of the Mexican Government draw their pay under assumed names and receive their mail at Box 1855, Mexico City." He included the following names with corresponding pseudonyms of "agents of the Mexican government." John Retinger (Antonio Reachis), Robert Haberman (Rodolfo Herrera), Ernest Gruening (Erasmus Guerra), and Frank Tannenbaum (Fernando Torres). Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, Sheffield to Kellogg, April 28, 1926, 812.20211/34.

and Veracruz; all Bolsheviki, for propaganda in the United States, and they are being put over the border with plenty of money as teachers or other professions and as tourists; and that the whole frontier is well organized with his people, meaning his labor organizations.¹⁶

The Mexican Communist Party continued its efforts to get CROM to join the Red International of Labor Unions and in Moscow CROM's Labor Attaché was invited to attend a meeting of the Red International of Labor Unions Executive Bureau. The attaché invited the International to send an observer to a CROM convention. These auspicious beginnings aborted by the short-sightedness of the First Secretary of Soviet Legation, who as a dinner speaker at a CROM banquet, berated his hosts for not holding membership in the R.I.L.U. Relations between CROM and the International cooled and their reciprocal invitations were cancelled. In March, 1926, Morones used an incident involving snooping by the Russians on Eulalio Martínez, the CROM Labor Attaché in Moscow, as an excuse to sever connections with the Soviets. Martínez was withdrawn, and the next CROM convention was asked to suspend official relations with the soviet labor movement.¹⁷

¹⁶ Morones was described in the following terms: "for several years he has been classed as an ultra-radical labor agitator, working more or less along the lines of Socialism." U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, February 16, 1926, 711.12/695.

¹⁷ New York Times, March 9, 1926. Morones' intrigues also helped to oust the governors of Nuevo León, Aguascalientes, Oaxaca, and San Luis Potosí. The first two refused to back strikers affiliated with CROM, while the others were in sympathy with the communists. Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, Bay to Kellogg, December 10, 1925, 812.504/750.

Another "reliable friend" dispatch described a farewell supper allegedly given by Obregón at Chapultepec Castle on November 23, 1926. Calles, Morones, Puig Casauranc, Luis León, and Obregón retired to a smoking-room to converse and gamble as they drank coffee and liquers. Obregón is supposed to have said, "I have made it clear to the whole world that we are not afraid of the Gringos and that I pulled Uncle Sam's whiskers." "For several years," he continued, "we have been sending over our border, daily, many soviet delegates who have been carrying on an admirable propaganda in the United States." At this point, there was much enthusiasm among those present over these remarks, and Morones embraced Obregón saying, "Now I know that you are an eternal companion."¹⁸ Several questions must be raised about this dialogue. Who was the Embassy's "mysterious" informant? Was he a qualified intelligence specialist? Why was Obregón in Mexico City instead of in Sonora at this time? Who was meant by "we," and why was Morones unaware of Obregón's "daily sending of soviet agents into the 'Gringo Republic?'" If one is skeptical of the veracity of this dispatch, and there is sufficient room for doubt, another communique sent ten days later is more questionable.

On December 17, 1926, Sheffield sent "absolutely authentic" data that "an reliable informant" had furnished him concerning an informal after-dinner talk in Queta's house in Tacubaya. "Queta" was a nickname for Enriqueta, the alleged mother of Morones' children,

¹⁸U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, December 7, 1926, 711.12/810.

and a woman who was reputed to own a tequilería or low-class drinking place. According to this source, a "friend said" Sheffield had arrived and asked Morones what would be the Mexican government's position. Morones replied the same as ever, "fooling the United States and making a damn fool of the Ambassador." He bragged of the multitudinous elements in Central America, South America, and the United States "which at the cost of much patience and money we have been able to introduce among the Gringos thousands of propagandists of our communist doctrines." Much of this money, he continued, was spent, since "we have to pay many newspapers in the United States and many Americans have helped us in this direction." Morones allegedly said that an expert arrived "to show us how to make and produce asphyxiating gases and other advantageous weapons." Furthermore, "our strength" is increased by the fellow feeling of the working classes of all Europe and Asia, principally that of the Japanese people and government. He then praised "our big friend" (amigota) Madame Kollantay, a great propagandist whose job it was to work especially among Mexican women destroying their religious sentiment, "the cause of the misfortunes of humanity." The supposed conversation came to a stirring end when Morones declared:

Now you know, boys, that our plan of action with the Gringos is to make damfools (sic) (pendejos) of them, telling them that we are not Bolsheviki; that, on the contrary, we are Christians, for in this sense our President will shortly make some declarations. (Applause and singing of the Internationale).

Sheffield's comment about this "reliable" dispatch was that, "It is primarily of interest as illustrating the point of view of men in

government here but less interesting, perhaps, as an expression of concrete policy."¹⁹

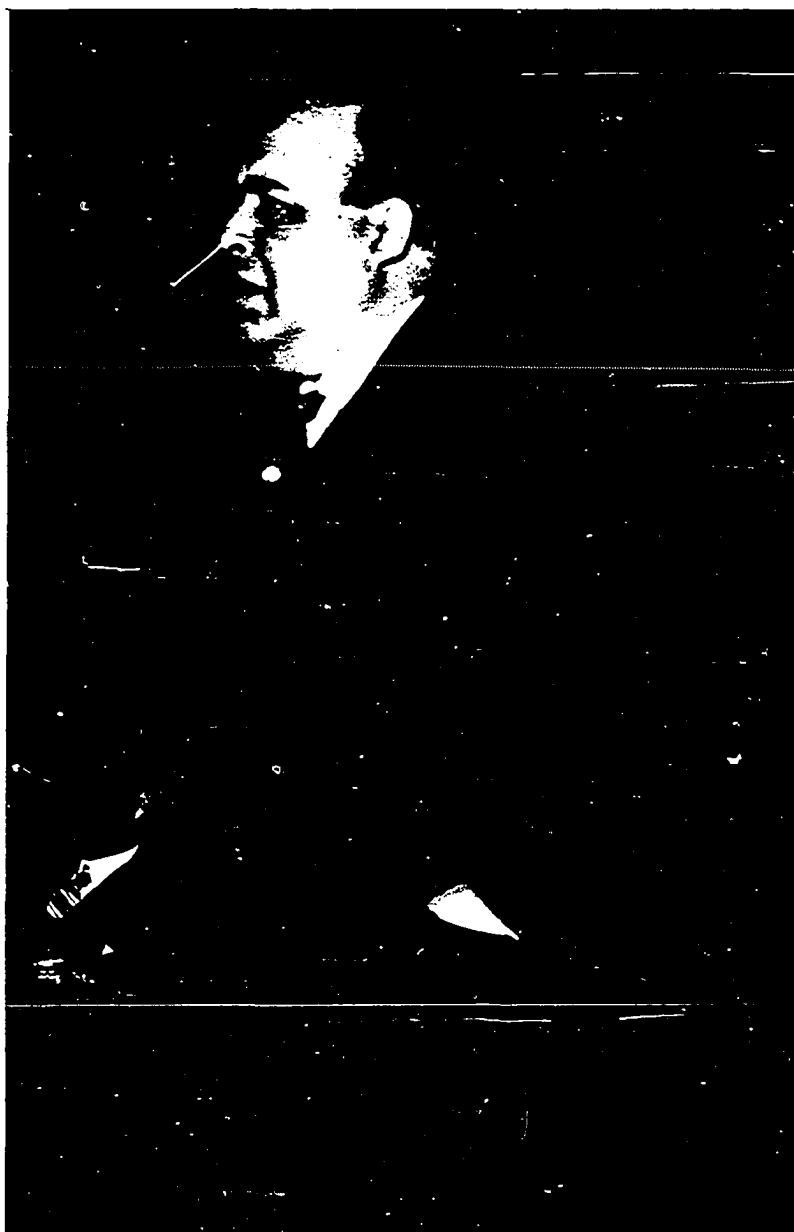
CROM leaders denied any collusion with the communists. Morones, for example, asked the expulsion of the Russian Ambassadors Madame Kollantay, "who converted the embassy into a center of Soviet propaganda."²⁰ Ricardo Treviño, CROM secretary general, also wired Kellogg to refute the Secretary of State's speech charging that CROM was communistic before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 12, 1927.²¹

Following his return from Europe in March, 1930, Morones took advantage of welcoming receptions to promote discord and harass Portes Gil. Addressing a meeting of the P.L.M. in the street in front of CROM offices, Morones and Lombardo Toledano bitterly attacked Portes Gil and the P.N.R. Morones accused the former president of using communist elements to instigate a plot against the life of

¹⁹Ibid., Sheffield to Kellogg, December 17, 1926, 711.12/780.

²⁰Luis N. Morones in El Universal, August 31, 1956.

²¹U.S. Political Relations, Mexico, 1910-1929, January 13, 1927, 711.12/855. Kellogg, who was invited before the committee to explain the basis and justification of the government's policy in Nicaragua and Mexico, claimed: "The plots to combat and overthrow American imperialism, particularly in Latin America, are formulated and fostered by the P.L.M., which is the communist organization in the country." See U.S. Congress, Congressional Record, Sixty-Ninth Congress, Second Session, LXVIII-Part 2 (Washington, 1927), 1649-1651 for Kellogg's undocumented claims. Kellogg released to the press a statement which tried to link the Mexican government and its interference in Nicaragua with the communist party in the United States hence with Russian Bolshevism.



Courtesy Archivo Casasola

LUIS N. MORONES IN THE 1930's. EDUARDO MONEDA IN THE BACKGROUND

President-Elect Ortiz Rubio during the latter's visit to the United States. According to Morones, Portes Gil brought various gunmen from Chicago and New York with him to Los Angeles "to do the job."²² Portes Gil, who was head of the P.N.R. against which the Morones elements would contend in the July, 1930 election for deputies and senators, described Morones' accusations as absurd. There is no reliable proof to support Morones' allegations that Portes Gil was behind any such plot.

After its fall from official favor, CROM's "self-defense against the Red menace" became the battle cry of a narrow and embittered faction. Morones and Lombardo Toledano persistently accused each other of communism on the one hand, and speculation and fraud on the other. During the 1940's Lombardo became the "kingpin" in communist trade union activities in Latin America, but refused to join the official Communist Party of Mexico. Morones continuously labeled Lombardo "communist" in addition to many other unflattering terms, such as, "traitor," "eunuch," and "man without a country." One particular charge, that Lombardo "smokes a pipe to imitate Stalin," borders on the ridiculous.²³

The formation of the C.T.A.L. in 1938 indicated to the P.A.F.L. leadership that a new era in international labor organization was beginning. There was still available a number of labor organizations

²²Miguel Gil in La Prensa, February 12, 1938.

²³Luis N. Morones in El Excelsior, July 23, 1945.

in Latin America which might be brought into the P.A.F.L. Acting on the A.F.L.'s decision, the P.A.F.L.'s executive committee, including Morones, decided to make a survey by correspondence in 1939 to ascertain opinion about assembling a sixth P.A.F.L. congress to improve international labor cooperation. Morones met with Green, Woll, and Iglesias in an executive council meeting in Washington in May, 1939, and they decided to hold an international conference in Havana in 1940. The object was to unite unions of "good faith" against Nazi, fascist, and communist syndicates.²⁴

Lombardo Toledano greeted Morones' announcement that the P.A.F.L. would convene with derision:

The political cadaver of Luis Morones declared yesterday in Washington, in the name of the defunct Pan-American Federation of Labor, that this shadow of...Pan-Americanism of the epoch of Theodore Roosevelt proposes to revive the tactic hated in all of Latin America, that of organizing the workers of its nations in order to subordinate them to the policies of the labor leaders of the U.S. who are in the services of the imperialist forces.

Lombardo charged that the real intention of those behind this move was to get Franklin D. Roosevelt's and Cárdenas' enemies to participate in the forthcoming presidential elections in the United States and Mexico. "Fortunately," concluded Lombardo, "Morones has about as

²⁴El Popular, May 18, 1939. At the annual A.F.L. convention meeting in Cincinnati in November, 1939, Morones again suggested that the P.A.F.L. renew its activities in Mexico, Central America, and South America. He asserted that the communistic C.T.M. was attempting to destroy CROM, and reasserted an empty CROM pledge--to uphold justice and democracy. "Luis N. Morones pide que se reanuden las actividades de la Confederación Obrera Pan-Americana," C.R.O.M., November, 1939, 26, 29.

much power in the social life of Mexico as he has in the Dominican Republic."²⁵

Morones alleged that Fidel Velázquez, C.T.M. secretary general, fearful that Lombardo would prevent his re-election and that Lombardo was implanting communist ideas in Mexico, suggested that CROM and C.T.M. merge in 1943. According to Morones, a close friend of Velázquez went to Morones' home to invite him to lunch with the C.T.M. boss. Morones arrived promptly and was apprised by the rival secretary general that he wished to combine the two unions to fling the communistic Lombardo "down from his pedestal" two weeks before the national C.T.M. congress. The meeting was cordial, included abrazos, and high praise for Morones from Velázquez.²⁶ Confronted by such inconclusive evidence, it cannot be verified that Velázquez ever approached Morones with such an offer.

In December, 1949, Morones instigated his "communist hunt." He requested Miguel Alemán's government that Lombardo Toledano and the remainder of the communist leaders be deprived of their nationality and released his list of "known or suspected communists" to the press.²⁷

²⁵El Popular, May 18, 1939.

²⁶El Excelsior, July 4, 1945; Eduardo Tellez V. in El Universal, July 6, 1945; El Nacional, July 6, 1945. Morones' anti-communist feelings were "colored" by his belief that cetemistas had "sold out" to Avila Camacho's government. Morones considered Lombardo and C.T.M. leadership traitors to the working class for their agreeing to prohibit strikes during World War II. Luis N. Morones in Las Novedades, April 19, 1945.

²⁷Lombardo Toledano, Ortega Arenas, David Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, Agustín Guzman V., Vidal Díaz Muñoz, Alfonso Palacios, Juan Mamuel Elizondo, González Flores, María Asunsolo, Dolores del Río, Flores Zaragoza, Sánchez Cárdenas, Juan O' Gorman, and Narciso Bassols were a few of those named. Las Novedades, December 30, 1949; La Prensa, December 30, 1949.

Later he publicized a copy of information sent to the Cominform by the Mexican Communist Party relating to a communist congress celebrated in Guatemala. Morones alleged that Valentín Campa, who represented the Mexican cells, said, "I greet you in the name of our comrade and ex-president Cárdenas." This statement, to Morones, signifies that the ex-president acted as communism's chief in Mexico. After this disclosure, the CROM leader claimed that Cárdenas was having his confederation's offices "watched" by cars.²⁸ Morones celebrated other anti-communist congresses in the Palace of Fine Arts in June and July, 1950. Stating that misery is the principal ally of the expansion of the communist doctrine, Morones urged the remedy of higher wages; and again read a list of "known communists."²⁹

During his "fight against international communism," Morones attended a conference held at Cuenca del Río de la Plata, Paraguay in February, 1952. In his address to the forerunner of A.T.L.A.S., Morones asserted that the "executioners and enemies" of the workers are "capitalistic and communistic imperialism," and urged the organizing of "the great army of workers of the fields and city."³⁰

In 1957, Morones wrote that he accepted Russia's governmental form for its country since "it is the best to judge its own acts,"

²⁸El Excelsior, July 18, 1945.

²⁹The list included Jesús Silva Herzog, Luis Padilla Nervo, and Luis Quintanilla among others. El Universal, June 30, 1950; El Zócalo, July 1, 1950.

³⁰El Excelsior, November 23, 1952.



Courtesy Archivo Casasola

Front row left to right: Robert Haberman, Miguel Alemán, Luis N. Morones, Rogelio de la Selva. Back row (right of center): José Petricioli and Juan Fonseca.

but opposed Russia's attempt to transplant its system and way of life. Morones, who was nationalistic and anti-communistic in orientation, considered both communism and capitalism as inadequate answers to Mexico's problems. He recognized that communism was not only a threat to national independence, but to his leadership of Mexico's organized labor movement.³¹

³¹Morones wrote, "not only have I never been affiliated with communism, but I have fought it for a long time." Luis N. Morones in El Universal, February 20, 1957.

CHAPTER XIII

MORONES, THE MAN

FAMILY LIFE

Since little has been written about Morones' personal life, the purpose of this brief chapter is to elucidate this neglected area. Morones had three wives, but not more than one at a time as was stated in a United States diplomatic dispatch. He married Felipa Peña Morales, María Teresa del Valle Monroy, and Berta Castillo Angellini. By his first wife, whom he divorced in 1922, he had his first child, Luis Enrique, who was born in December, 1916. Luis Enrique stated that although María Teresa joined Morones in exile in 1936 and "passed" as his wife, they did not marry until much later. Morones divorced her to marry Berta who still resides in Mexico City.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Berta admits that Luis was not handsome, but claims that his "magnificent personality" attracted her. Commenting on Morones' personal appearance, she used the phrase "siempre estaba bien presentado"; he wore expensive ties and silk shirts, tailor-made suits, and never went without shaving. Professor Robert J. Alexander, who observed Morones in 1948, described him as being stocky, advanced in baldness, and tall for a Mexican. Alexander commented that Morones was so well-dressed that he did not resemble a labor leader. Bertram Wolfe supplied a fairly accurate portrayal of Morones when he described him as:

Gross, fleshy, thick-lipped, heavy-jowled, soft and pudgy-handed, redolent of perfume, fond of silk underwear and diamonds, he looks more like the newspaper cartoon conception of a capitalist than he does a labor leader. His sybaritic softness of exterior gives no inkling of the ruthless hardness and lust for power that enabled him to bestride the confused, chaotic, mistrustful and immature labor movement of the twenties and bend it to his will.¹

Morones was corpulent. Bertram Wolfe's Portrait of Mexico contains numerous reproductions of murals drawn by Diego Rivera, one of Mexico's outstanding artists. Rivera had a strong dislike for Morones. One of his murals on the National Palace stairway portrays Morones' fleshy face with a straw hat over his eyes, and another portrays him as a huge pig beating cymbals behind a figure representing Calles. In this last fresco, "The Big Boss and his Labor Lieutenant," Morones has puffy cheeks and thick lips.²

Morones' son, Luis Enrique, calculates that Morones weighed 220 pounds during 1924-29. If his estimate is correct, it disproves the excessively high figure of 300 pounds which Hubert Herring and John Edwin Fagg printed (without documentation) in their Latin American history texts. Partly because of his obesity, Morones enjoyed Turkish baths, and his widow relates that he went several times daily during his latter years.

¹Bertram D. Wolfe, Portrait of Mexico (New York, 1937), 179.

²Ibid. See plates 226 and 246 in Portrait of Mexico.



Courtesy El Excelsior

LUIS N. MORONES ADDRESSING CROM, 1940



Courtesy José Petricioli

JOSE PETRICIOLI



Courtesy Archivo Casasola

ZAPATA AGUSTIN CASASOLA



Courtesy L.E. Morones Peña

LUIS ENRIQUE MORONES PEÑA

PERSONALITY

Morones' volatile, forceful personality and blunt manners aroused strong dislike. An excitable, emotional and strong-willed person, his poignant verbal attacks and demeanor aroused tempests of polemics.

The point is frequently made that Morones was austere and humorless, but this basically depended on his relationship and interaction with those around him. Carleton Beals, for example, evaluated him as "a cold man who tried his best to be cordial."³ Ramón Eduardo Ruíz wrote:

I never met Luis Morones, though I spoke with many who had. Frankly, I never had a high opinion of the man....Katherine Anne Porter's short story...on Morones...is fiction but, I think, descriptive of the man. The title is Flowering Judas.⁴

Since Morones rode in a bullet-proof automobile during his tenure as Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, Luis Enrique related an interesting anecdote about his father. Without specifying when the incident happened, he stated that Morones escaped injury when the car he drove collided with a cow on the Laredo

³Beals to Buford, February 19, 1970, L.S.U. Archives. One of Morones' attempts at humor was a pun on Jesús Corona's name: ¿"Por qué a los perros les llaman chuchos y a las cervezas coronas?" Petricioli, El compañero Morones, 62.

⁴Ruiz to Buford, December 24, 1969, L.S.U. Archives. Miss Porter knew Morones and had told Carleton Beals that she intended to write a sketch of the detestable labor boss. Braggioni, a Mexican labor leader in Flowering Judas, could very easily be Porter's "fictional" portrayal of Morones: callous, corrupt, malicious, wicked, vain of his talents, dangerous to offend, powerful, and clad in expensive garments with a diamond hoop in his necktie.

Highway.⁵

ALTRUISM

Since Morones was a ruthless man who faced up to situations of life and death fearlessly, one is apt to diminish his "good" side. According to his widow, if a poor person asked Morones for bread on the streets, he would take the impoverished individual to a restaurant and tell the waiter "to serve this person what he wants." Morones would then pay the bill.⁶ Beals, however, who was riding in Morones' limousine, witnessed Morones laughingly refuse an elderly woman's modest pleas for fifty centavos.⁷

Remembering the difficulties of his childhood and realizing that the youth are the future of Mexico, Morones was supposedly generous to children (especially the newspaper vendors in the streets). Occasionally he would inquire how many papers the boys had, then he would buy ten or twenty issues from them. These acts, Morones' widow believes, demonstrated her husband's generosity.⁸

Beals described another interesting anecdote concerning two incidents of Morones' beneficence when he wrote:

He was very kind to one of his secretaries Mary Doherty, an American girl, who was faithfully devoted to him. And an American anarchist, an ex-cook who sabotaged elite

⁵Interview, Mexico City, August 28, 1968.

⁶Interview, Mexico City, August 3, 1968.

⁷Interview, Baton Rouge, April 12, 1970.

⁸Interview, Mexico City, August 3, 1968.

banquets by putting emetic in the soup, and had finally to flee to Mexico, and went insane while doing a biography of Morones. Morones visited him in the asylum and saw to it he had good care.⁹

Morones' widow related that Morones had a very noble heart and was loyal and devoted to his comrades. "He was always a friend to his friends," she said. Judging by Morones' prolonged hostilities with Portes Gil, Lombardo Toledano, and Aáron Sáenz, the converse also appears to have been true; "an enemy was always an enemy."

DIVERSIONS AND PASTIMES

Berta describes CROM as being "the true passion of Luis' life." Morones often cancelled plans he had made with her for some unexpected CROM business. He once told her, "It is my life, I cannot leave it." After only partially recuperating from surgery in 1958, for example, Morones travelled to Acapulco to inaugurate a CROM building in that port town. According to Berta, Morones had a paternalistic attitude toward workers and viewed them as a father would his rebellious sons.¹⁰

Morones loved music, especially classical, opera, and the "folklórico" of Spain. He played a mandolin during his youth, and

⁹Beals to Buford, February 19, 1970, L.S.U. Archives. The would-be biographer thoroughly enjoyed the sight of persons regurgitating on banquet tables. Beals met the cook on a Mexico City street corner two days before the latter was committed to the asylum. Interview, Baton Rouge, April 12, 1970.

¹⁰Interview, Mexico City, August 3, 1968. When asked if she had read Petricioli's biography, she expressed her disappointment and disagreement with the superficial volume. Her husband died an "idealist with many deceptions"; Petricioli "imagines Luis without knowing him, what he has written is not Luis -- it is too flowery."

frequently accompanied his friend Jesús Corona who played the piano. Morones later switched to playing the guitar, which like the mandolin he never formally studied, but "played by ear." He was so captivated by guitars that he once bought an expensive, beautiful Valenciana guitar in Spain.

Luis Enrique relates that his father often played dominoes during his youth, but preferred rentoy, a card game, in his later years. He confined his sports to frontón, a handball game which he preferred to play with a tennis racket to make it a much faster game. During his interview with Morones in February, 1957, Professor John W.F. Dulles was impressed by a large stuffed fish which was hanging on the wall and which Morones stated he had caught several years earlier.¹¹ It is unlikely that Morones ever fished since he never liked to participate in sports.

Morones' taste in food was cosmopolitan. Invariably he had a good appetite and his third wife cannot recall a food he disliked. Some of his favorite dishes were crepes suzette and sopa de médulla con criadillos. He enjoyed drinking wine, whisky, cognac (with or without coffee), but refrained from drinking beer or pulque. Beals states that Morones was discrete in his drinking habits, he had his copas but Beals never saw him "tight." Morones likewise smoked cigarettes but in moderation.

¹¹Dulles to Buford, March 7, 1970, L.S.U. Archives.

ORATORY

Morones' oratorical ability was one of his chief assets. During his lengthy career he made thousands of speeches and trained himself to think and speak on the spot. Both Portes Gil and Alfonso Sánchez Madariaga admit that Morones possessed a facility for words and a quality for speaking effectively. After reading many of Morones' unpolished and monotonous speeches (in which he often circumvented the major questions), it is obvious that his effectiveness depended on the verve of his delivery and the audience's involvement with the issues.

Morones often employed an inflammatory oratory which could seize the imagination of an audience with the persuasiveness of his speaking style. An illustration of his success in persuasion occurred at a private dinner given for the Mexican labor leader in New York City in 1925. After having answered questions "of the most searching character" for almost two hours concerning the extraordinary advance in the condition of Mexican laborers in the past twenty years, one of his listeners wrote:

It is encouraging to all who are interested in the progress of democratic government to have knowledge of an Administration which is devoted with such high intelligence to an earnest effort to know and to seek the truth and to put in practice principles around which millions of men have gathered and to which they have consecrated their lives.¹²

¹²George Foster Peabody in the New York Times, September 10, 1925. In 1962, Morones addressed a CROM meeting in the Lírico Theater. By this time the seventy-two year-old labor leader had lost his vibrant delivery. Luis Araiza, Historia de la Casa del Obrero Mundial, 271 Considering that he gave so many speeches, Morones never wrote much compared with his rivals Lombardo Toledano and Portes Gil.



Courtesy La Prensa

LUIS N. MORONES ARRIVING TO ADDRESS CROM MEETING, MAY, 1962

MEDICAL HISTORY

Morones suffered diverse illnesses throughout his life. His physical misfortunes began in 1916 when a partial facial paralysis left him inflicted with a nervous tic in his upper lip and right eyelid. A bullet pierced his left side grazing his left lung during a gunfight in the Chamber of Deputies in November, 1924. Morones later developed diabetes, uremia, and ulcers. He fell in the bathtub fracturing several ribs in 1954.

As a result of a gangrene infection, Morones lost the toes of his left foot; his right foot was amputated to the shin in 1957. Following this operation, Morones attended the Rehabilitation Institute in Tlalpan to learn to walk with the aid of parallel bars and crutches. He used a wheelchair in his home, but refused to utilize it or crutches outside of his residence. Morones was forced to use a compliment which was added to his left shoe, and a modified artificial leg for his right appendage. Although walking tired him, Morones remained fairly active and continued to address labor meetings. On one occasion, the seventy-two-year-old leader had to be helped down the aisle of the Lírico Theater by means of a cane held in his right hand, and walked arm in arm with Dionisio Sánchez for additional support.¹³

The last year of Morones' life was painful. He was hospitalized from November, 1963 to January, 1964 because of a tumor on one of his

¹³C.R.O.M. Memoria, 1961-1963, 121; picture in photograph archive of La Prensa.

kidneys. Following his discharge from the National Medical Center, Morones went to Cuernavaca and Acapulco to recuperate. Two weeks later he suffered a relapse and doctors decided to return him to the capital. Morones lived for the last two months by virtue of injections and blood transfusions given him at his home.

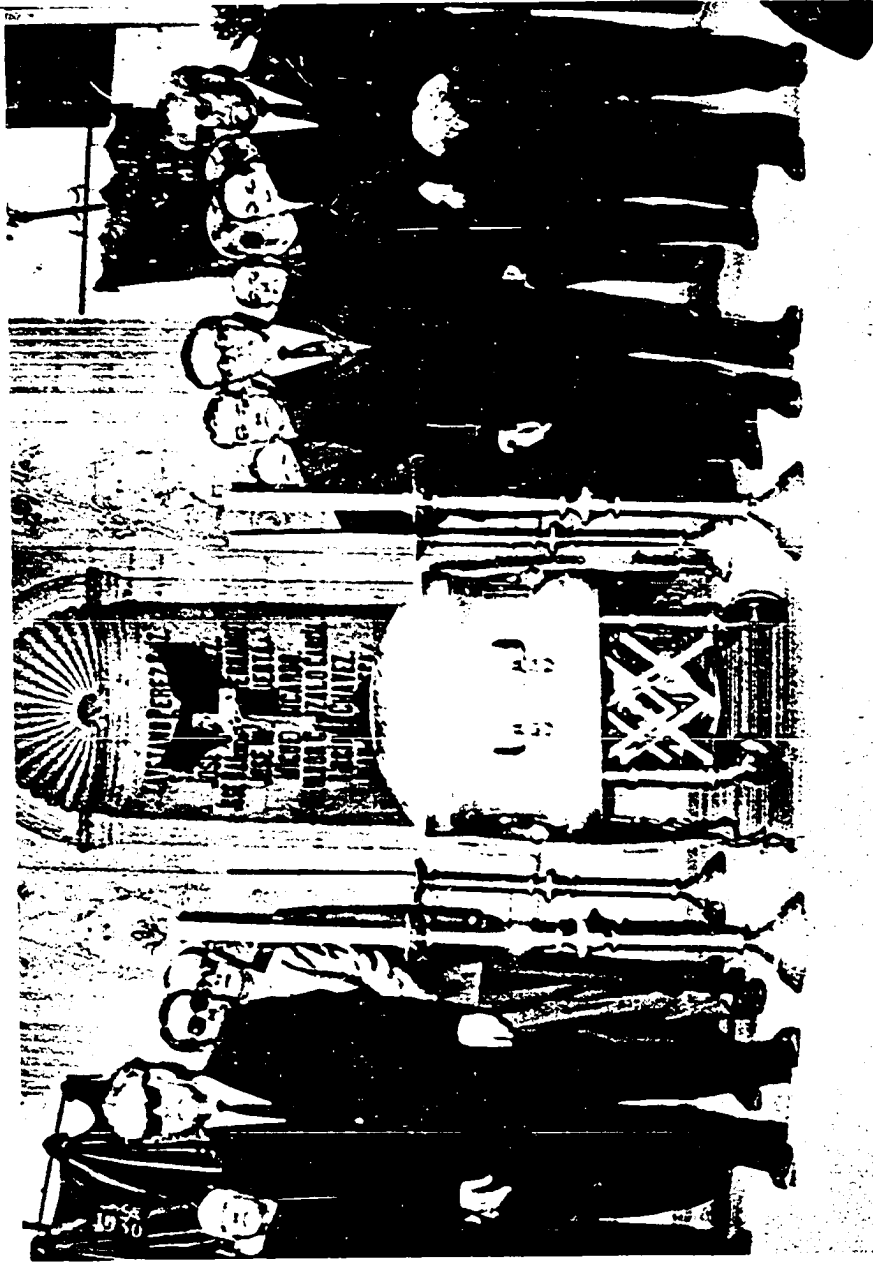
DEATH AND BURIAL

Morones, undermined by years of illness and suffering from a renal infection and diverse complications, died in his home on April 6, 1964 at 3:00 P.M. Shortly before expiring, he painfully murmured to his old friend Reynaldo Cervantes Torres, "Don't move me from bed...I want to rest in peace for one time."

His corpse was transferred to CROM offices, where his coffin was placed between four candles and under a crucifix to receive posthumous homage. CROM secretary general Antonio Hernández, Rigoberto González, José Petricioli, Fidel Velázquez and Justino Sánchez Madariaga of the C.T.M., some founders of the Casa del Obrero Mundial, Licenciado Julio Santos Coy representing President Adolfo López Mateos, and others stood watch. Santos Coy stated, "We deeply lament that one of the pioneers of the Mexican labor movement has died."¹⁴

Numerous government officials sent their condolences. A few of these were: President López Mateos, Benito Coquet, Director of Social Security; Salomón González Blanco, Secretary of Labor; Tomás

¹⁴El Excelsior, April 7, 1964.



Courtesy La Prensa

MORONES' COFFIN IN CROM OFFICES, APRIL 7, 1964

Morentes, ex-governor of Yucatan; and ex-president Miguel Alemán who sent a floral arrangement of chrysanthemums and telephoned from New York.

The Pateón Francés de la Piedad on Avenida Cuauhtémoc was selected for the funeral services. Some five hundred persons attended Morones' last rites.¹⁵ Luis Araiza and Antonio Hernández helped carry the gray metal coffin draped with a CROM flag, the word "lealtad," (loyalty) and later covered with twenty to forty wreaths of flowers.

Some complimentary things were said at the funeral of the once criticized and maligned labor czar. Antonio Hernández gave the first speech, a short biographical sketch which was followed by his praising of Morones' high values as a national director, politician, and great patriot. Celestino Gasca, who had been expelled from CROM twenty-eight years earlier because of Morones' "trumped up charges," claimed that "the workers' organizations of the Republic and of the world have lost a great fight."¹⁶ Lombardo Toledano added that "I am a son of the CROM; with all respects,

¹⁵Some of those in attendance were: José Mariá Tapía, Melchor Ortega, Undersecretary in Charge of Gobernación in Calles' cabinet; Jesús Yúren, secretary general of the Federation of Workers of the Federal District; Julio Santos Coy who represented President López Mateos; Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Fidel Velázquez who paid homage for the C.T.M. central committee, Morones' widow, his children (Luis Enrique, Luis Hernando, Elvira, Josefina, and Alma Morones Viuda de Vallejo), and several of his grandchildren.

¹⁶La Prensa, April 7, 1964.

gentlemen, in these moments we are all equal."¹⁷ Alfonso Guzmán Neyra, head of the Mexican Supreme Court, then said of Morones, "Although he was very controversial, he was one of the persons who was most interested in the welfare of his class and fought for it...one must realize that he was a prominent figure within the Mexican workers' movement."¹⁸ Following the eulogies and as a band played "Silencio," Morones' cadaver was interred at 4:00 P.M.

¹⁷El Excelsior, April 7, 1964.

¹⁸Ibid. Morones' well-kept marble grave (No. 183 of the first avenue of the Panteón Francés de la Piedad), is adorned by a bronze bust of the labor leader and the inscription, "Luis N. Morones, 11 Octubre 1890-5 Abril 1964. Recuerdo cariñoso de su esposa, hijos y nietos." Berta Castillo bought the burial plot for Morones on August 9, 1945 for 320 pesos. Olga María Díaz Portillo, interview, Mexico City, April 1, 1971. Señora Díaz Portillo is the cemetery's director.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

Although in its congresses and through its press CROM advocated direct action, its leaders engaged heavily in political labor action, which Morones disguised under the name of multiple action. Less radical than anarcho-syndicalist groups, CROM under the conservative Morones was content to be a virtual partner of the government and helped shape labor policy from 1920-28. In the hey-day of trade unionism under Calles and Morones, the strength of labor, which meant the power of CROM, depended upon a federal government whose head was personally eager to support labor's demands with government's force. Instead of the state falling under labor control as Morones earlier promised in his pre-CROM days, CROM fell increasingly under state control and served as the backbone of Calles' forces during his administration.

Morones enjoyed a unique position during CROM's golden years. The double position of "government man" and union head gave Morones decisive power to augment CROM membership, enforce the closed shop in CROM plants, and cripple rival unions. Morones served as Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, and other CROM leaders were congressmen, state legislators, and governors. One must not exaggerate the implications of this relationship, but one should be careful not to underestimate it. If Morones' CROM was not running the government, it came as close as possible to making the relationship a diarchy.

In appointing Morones to his cabinet (a cabinet position had greater importance in Mexico than in the United States) Calles, who liked, trusted, and needed Morones, repaid a political debt, but exceeded a mere political obligation by giving organized labor a recognition and standing surpassing any it ever had enjoyed. As Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, Morones accomplished little that was noteworthy. He was, in fact, distinctly mediocre in that position. During his period of control of the government's labor relations, no labor legislation of any importance was enacted. A rather ineffectual law was passed in 1925 regulating the right to work, but it seems to have been forced on Morones by the demands of labor.

Many of Minister Morones' actions reflected no particular merit on him. He served as an actual impediment to advance since he used his labor dictatorship to smash independent and rival unions (such as the railway strikes of 1922 and 1926, and tranviarios strike in 1923), practice collusion, utilize extortion, harass business and industry, attempt judicial subservience, and accomplish little for the campesinos. Another socially divisive and disintegrating affect was the alienation of one wing of labor, Morones' CROM, from other labor wings and from the agrarians. In short, Morones was not "detached" enough to devote to his important ministry the seriousness, earnestness, objectivity, and enterprise which it required.

Although many of the problems with which Morones contended had their roots in the past, he knew little of monetary economics, credit analysis, or agricultural economics. In addition, he curtailed remedial

technical progress which he regarded as negative and undesirable. In order to protect jobs, he misguidedly fought progressive methods which would have increased factory output. In order to provide work for unemployed or underemployed urban workers, Morones tended to emphasize labor-intensive techniques. He used his governmental position to prevent progress in the factories by refusing to install modern machinery, except in the new mills. Acting under the belief that efforts to change methods of manufacture would inevitably increase unemployment, an economic ill which he hoped to limit, Morones carried his inefficient principles too far and adversely affected the nation's aggregate product by retarding labor-saving technological developments.

Labor organization is an excellent idea, but ideas, if they are to be of much use, require intelligent and dedicated direction. Unfortunately, labor did not receive the altruistic guidance of leaders who were unselfishly and genuinely interested in the upgrading of the laborers' social and economic position. One may censure CROM leaders for sacrificing the labor movement to opportunism, personal fortunes, unscrupulous conduct, and labor liderismo. The wealth amassed from this graft could have been employed for beneficial purposes: the foundation of schools, clinics, and libraries. Instead, Morones and his cohorts in the Grupo Acción vainly adhered more to luxury than to noblesse oblige. Labor leadership under Morones tended to be corrupt, combined whenever necessary, with violence and strong-arm methods. Morones, for example, imposed Carlos Riva Palacio as governor in the State of Mexico against the

will of the people by sending large numbers of laborers to Toluca and to other important voting centers, by special trains where they were able to control or prevent voting.

Even when Morones' party, P.L.M., was at the peak of its power, it made no effort to correct or eliminate any of the major political evils in Mexico. An excellent opportunity was lost during which leaders might have taken steps toward formulating a federal labor code, and toward establishing a unified labor movement in Mexico which would be able to stand on its own merits when a change in government ended its support. The opposition of Morones, who wanted to keep as much control over labor as possible in his own hands and make himself indispensable to labor by making labor dependent on him, seems to have partly been responsible for the lack of a federal labor law. Regarding himself as the patron of the labor movement, Morones intended that the rank and file should look up to him for both economic and political protection; and did nothing to develop permanent economic power in the unions and protect labor by legislation. Therefore, no reform in political practices exists today as a result of his CROM's favored position in the government.

Morones' influence was also negative in the petroleum controversy where he proved to be an obstacle to harmonious Mexican-United States relations. The Mexican government delegated the authority of cancelling the permits to drill for oil to Minister Morones who spoke rather vaguely in spelling out "the rules of the game." The lower Mexican tribunals decided in favor of the companies; but Morones asking for revision, passed the case to the Supreme Court. On November 17, 1927,

this superior tribunal decided that the Minister of Industry could not cancel drilling permits for lands on which "positive acts" had not been made before May 1, 1917, because the owner had failed to apply for a concession of fifty years prescribed by Article 15 of the petroleum law. On December 26, 1927, Calles sent a message to the Mexican Congress proposing the modification of the articles in question, and this was done.

Although Morones failed to fulfill many of his demagogic promises, CROM policies yielded many positive results, and certain gains accrued to the workers. Labor came more nearly to the point of being completely unified under CROM's banner than at any other period since Mexico had become "labor-conscious." Labor, or at least a part of it, achieved the right to organize, strike, and bargain collectively. CROM, through its influence in the government, helped enforce Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution which provided for shorter working hours, better working conditions, higher wages, health and safety measures, indemnification of injured workers, and partitioned some lands.

The organization of great numbers of persons who were illiterate, inexperienced, and who had never previously been organized in any way into unions, was a tremendous task and was accomplished. Morones gave impetus to the formation of a worker's organization of considerable importance in the political future of Mexico and no one influenced or determined the labor movement in Mexico as much as Morones did until his downfall in 1928. To some extent, labor was politicized and admitted to society's decision-making processes. Cromistas

participated politically in naming candidates for political offices and in formulating governmental programs. This tendency toward a more pluralistic process broadened the basis of Mexican society and served as a link between tradition and modernity.

One laudatory evaluation of Morones comes from Frank Tannenbaum, a leading Mexicanist whose published comments were based on a close personal association with him. The American professor wrote in the early 1930's that:

It has always seemed to me that the work of Morones, in its general and specific influence upon the place of labor in the scheme of Mexican life and labor, of Mexican politics and policy, in the bringing of the worker into the arena where he is both counted and counts, compares with that of Zapata in the agrarian field. It is true that for the moment the labor movement in Mexico and even the leadership has declined, as so often everything seems to decline in Mexico, sacrificed to political ends and personal ends and personal fortune. The leaders may be censured, but no group in Mexico has been more loyal to its broader aims than the labor group collected about Morones. Neither Calles nor Obregón can boast of having given to Mexico so permanent and, in the long run, so effective an institution for broad democratic ends as is to be had in the trade-union movement regardless of what happens to the personal fortune of Morones or of the Grupo Acción.¹

The 1928 presidential election, a major turning point in the organization's history, changed Morones' and CROM's future. CROM's leaders believed that it was time that a civilian became president and, in addition, that he should be Morones. Ex-president Obregón, however, had decided that he wanted to return to the presidency, and Calles not only supported him, but even facilitated the arrangement

¹Tannenbaum, Peace by Revolution, 246-247.

by changing the Constitution to make it possible.

It is uncertain whether Morones had anything to do with the death of Obregón; but it was generally believed in Mexico that Obregón had been responsible, while he was president, for an attempt on Morones' life; and it was no secret that Morones did not feel personally secure with Obregón in the capital in a position of presidential power. It has been alleged that Morones was the intellectual author of the assassination, and although it remains problematical, the burden of proof must lie with the accusers whose charges are indefinite.

One central theme emerging from a study of Morones and his CROM, and a salient fact that must be underscored, is the key role played by the federal government. Between 1920 and 1940 there is a direct correlation between CROM's strength and the favorable or unfavorable governmental policy manifested toward CROM. Therefore, when Morones resigned from the cabinet, and CROM in effect joined the opposition, virtual war was declared between the administration and the labor group. A number of circumstances contributed to these events: Morones' support of and partnership with Calles, the labor leader's possible role in Obregón's assassination, the personal feud between 1928 and 1930 with President Portes Gil, the Paso Macho train explosion, as well as the reactions which finally occurred against this corrupt gangster, help explain CROM's swift decline during the administrations of Portes Gil and Cárdenas whose animosity Morones had provoked.

Morones lacked a few of the essential requisites of success in political life: he was not conciliatory, and did not master or grasp the importance of respecting his opponents' opinions. He was incapable

of shifting with the currents and tenaciously stuck to his views regardless of how ruinous and short-sighted they were. These flaws quickened his undoing and he committed "political suicide" by refusing to join the P.N.R. Morones blundered and hastened the confrontation with Portes Gil by adopting a collision course. Morones' power was curtailed and minimized and CROM came out of the struggle much poorer, less influential, and on the defensive against continuing threats to its decreasing power.

Morones, characteristic of the Latin American concept of personalismo, was the labor organization's major asset under Calles, yet he was its chief liability under Portes Gil and Cárdenas. It was more a question of personality and temperament than of fundamental issues. It must be remembered that "Morones" and "CROM" were virtually synonymous. CROM languished and failed to shape governmental labor policy under these two presidents because it was chained to a corpse -- the stigma of its unending association with Luis N. Morones. What happened after 1935 when a cache of arms was found in two of Morones' buildings seemed more in the nature of an anticlimax -- any fright he inspired was due to unpleasant memories he awakened rather than to his actual power.

Less significant but more spectacular than his exile was Morones' flirtation with Peronism. A.T.L.A.S. was strong only in Argentina and exerted little influence in the labor movement of other Latin American countries where peronistas never accomplished more than making a few contacts and distributing Peronist propaganda in Mexico. Morones was out of power and tried, but to no avail, to regain his lost prominence.

The influence of the organized labor movement within the government political party declined considerably in the quarter of a century following the Cárdenas administration. This was due largely to the stabilization of the country's political life, the economic development of the nation, and the increased membership of the Popular Organizations Sector of the P.R.I. As the security of the government became greater, and the possibility of armed insurrection against it declined, the regime came to depend less than in the past upon the potential military help of organized workers under leaders like Morones. An example of this occurred in 1959 when Morones advised that the one method to unify the workers would be to form a Consejo Técnico Obrero without a preference of some organizations over others.² Such a suggestion from a "powerless power" is understandable. Morones had fallen from the driver's seat, but still demanded equal treatment. Nevertheless, this pioneer labor leader had made an all-important beginning and accomplished more for organized workers than had any Mexican predecessor.

²El Diario de México, May 3, 1959.

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APPENDIX A

A BRIEF MORONES CHRONOLOGY

- 1890, October 11. Born in San Fernando de Tlalpan.
- 1907. Began to use the initial "N" between his Christian name and surname.
- 1913. Joined the Casa del Obrero Mundial.
- 1915. Named Director of the Mexican Telegraph and Telephone Company.
- 1916. Secretary of the Pachuca municipal council.
- 1916. Sentenced to death by Carranza.
- 1917, February. Unsuccessful Socialist Workers' Party candidate for Federal Deputy.
- 1918, May. CROM founded in Saltillo, Coahuila.
- 1918, November. P.A.F.L. founded in Laredo, Texas.
- 1919, August 6. CROM-Obregón pact signed.
- 1919, December. P.L.M. founded in Mexico City.
- 1920, April 11. Helped Obregón escape from carrancista police in Mexico City.
- 1920, April 24. Plan of Agua Prieta announced.
- 1920, July. Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama withdrew from CROM.
- 1920. President Obregón named Morones superintendent of the Government Military Manufacturing Establishments.
- 1920, December-December, 1924. Federal Deputy from Tacubaya.
- 1921, February. C.G.T. formed.
- 1923, January. Crushed streetcar workers' strike.
- 1923, September. Resigned as head of Government Military Manufacturing Establishments to take charge of Calles' presidential campaign.
- 1923, September 23. "First socialist wedding celebrated in Mexico."

- 1923, December. CROM helps defeat de la Huerta uprising against Obregón.
- 1924, January 3. Governor Felipe Carrillo Puerto assassinated in Mérida, Yucatán.
- 1924, January 23. Senator Francisco Field Jurado assassinated in Mexico City.
- 1924, October. Coerced the National Eucharistic Congress to cancel its production of "El divino Narciso."
- 1924, November 12. Wounded in gunfight in the Chamber of Deputies.
- 1924, November 30-July 21, 1928. Calles' Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor.
- 1924, December 13. Samuel Gompers died in San Antonio, Texas.
- 1925, December. New Petroleum Law and Alien Land Law enacted.
- 1926-29. Cristero Rebellion.
- 1926, December. Crushed railway strike.
- 1927, January 1. New Petroleum Law and Alien Land Law became effective.
- 1927, March 30. Calles refused Morones' resignation.
- 1927, October 3. General Francisco Serrano assassinated in Cuernavaca.
- 1927, November 4. General Arnulfo Gómez assassinated near Coatepec, Veracruz.
- 1928, March 28. Amicable termination of the petroleum controversy.
- 1928, July 17. President-Elect Obregón assassinated in La Bombilla Restaurant in San Angel.
- 1928, July 21. Cromistas resigned from their appointed governmental positions.
- 1928, July 30. José Toral, Obregón's assassin, declared that Morones had nothing to do with the murder.
- 1928, December. Elected CROM president; launched strong verbal attack on President Emilio Portes Gil.
- 1930, August 21. CROM-Obregón pact made public.
- 1932, August 18-20. Detained in Los Mochis jail.

- 1932. Alfredo Pérez Médina and Vicente Lombardo Toledano broke with CROM.
- 1935, December 13. Returned to Mexico with Calles.
- 1935, December 18. Mexican Senate indicted Morones for sedition and incitement to rebellion.
- 1935, December 20. Arsenal found in two of his homes.
- 1936, January. CROM expelled Celestino Gasca.
- 1936, April 7. Paso Macho train explosion.
- 1936, April 10. Exiled to the United States with Calles, Luis León, and Rafael Melchor Ortega.
- 1937, February 24. Secretary of Interior permitted Morones' return to Mexico.
- 1938, March. Allegedly offered President Cárdenas "secret documents" pertaining to foreign petroleum companies.
- 1938, April. CROM expelled Ricardo Treviño.
- 1938. Unsuccessful attempt to strengthen the P.A.F.L.
- 1939, December 5. Santiago Iglesias died.
- 1941-1943. Served as CROM secretary general.
- 1943. Fidel Velásquez allegedly proposed C.T.M.-CROM merger.
- 1947-49. Served as CROM secretary general.
- 1948, January. Defended Argentine C.G.T. in Lima Conference.
- 1948, January 23. Visited President Perón and addressed C.G.T. rally in Buenos Aires' Luna Park.
- 1949. Designated as CROM's permanent advisor and councilor.
- 1951, January. Received three C.G.T. representatives who Perón sent to Mexico City at Morones' request.
- 1952, July 26. Attended Eva Perón's funeral.
- 1952, November. A.T.L.A.S. founded.

1956, December-March, 1957. Wrote "Calles obligó a las compañías petroleras a cumplir las leyes," his only major writing.

1964, April 6. Died at 3 P.M. in his home in Mexico City.

1964, April 7. Buried at 4 P.M. at Panteón Francés de la Piedad, Mexico City.

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

A.F.L.: American Federation of Labor.

Agrupación de Trabajadores Latinoamericanos (A.T.L.A.S.): Latin American Association of Trade Unionists.

Amparo: Mexican writ combining the characteristics of habeas corpus, mandamus, and certiorari.

Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana (A.C.J.M.): Catholic Association of Mexican Youth.

Bloque de Unidad Obrera (B.U.O.): Labor Unity Bloc.

Callista: follower of Plutarco Elías Calles.

Cardenista: follower of Lázaro Cárdenas.

Carrancista: follower of Venustiano Carranza.

Casa del Obrero Mundial: House of the World's Workers.

Confederación de Trabajadores Cubanos (C.T.C.): Confederation of Cuban Workers.

Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina (C.T.A.L.): Confederation of Latin American Workers.

Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (C.T.M.): Confederation of Mexican Workers.

Confederación General de Obreros y Campesinos de México (C.G.O.C.M.): General Confederation of Workers and Peasants of Mexico.

Confederación General de Trabajadores (C.G.T.): General Confederation of Workers.

Confederación Interoamericana de Trabajadores (C.I.T.): Inter-American Confederation of Workers.

Cristero: "man of Christ."

Continuismo: one person maintains himself in power.

Cromista: CROM supporter.

De la huertista: follower of Adolfo de la Huerta.

Establecimientos Fabriles y Militares: Military and Manufacturing Establishments.

Gomista: follower of Arnulfo Gómez.

Grupo Acción: "Action Group." Elite policy-making group of CROM.

I.C.F.T.U.: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

I.W.W.: Industrial Workers of the World.

Mordida: bribe.

Moronista: follower of Luis N. Morones.

Obregonista: follower of Alvaro Obregón.

O.R.I.T.: Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores.

Pan-American Federation of Labor (P.A.F.L.): Confederación Obrera Pan-Americana.

Partido Comunista Mexicano (P.C.M.): Mexican Labor Party.

Partido Nacional Revolucionario (P.N.R.): National Revolutionary Party.

Partido Revolucionario Institucional (P.R.I.): Institutional Revolutionary Party.

Partido Socialista Obrero (P.S.O.): Socialist Workers' Party.

Personalismo: personalism.

Plan Green: alleged United States invasion design for Mexico, 1924-27.

Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (S.M.E.): Mexican Union of Electricians.

W.F.T.U.: World Federation of Trade Unions.

APPENDIX C

CROM SECRETARY GENERALS, 1918-68

Raymundo Valdés	1919-20
Eulalio Martínez	1920-21
José F. Gutiérrez	1921-22
Eduardo Moneda	1922-23
Ricardo Treviño	1923-24
Eduardo Moneda	1924-26
Ricardo Treviño	1926-28
Reynaldo Cervantes Torres	1928-32
Eucario León	1932-34
Martín Torres	1934-35
Ricardo Treviño	1935-37
Eucario León	1937-39
Samuel Vargas R.	1939-41
Luis N. Morones	1941-43
Florentino Maya	1943-45
Emilio Barragán	1945-47
Luis N. Morones	1947-49
Rigoberto González Flores	1949-51
Florentino Maya	1951-53
Nicolás López Galindo	1953-55
Florentino Domínguez Leal	1955-57
Antonio J. Hernández	1957-59

Agustín Pérez Caballero	1959-61
Alfonso Elorza S.	1961-63
Antonio J. Hernández	1963-65
Filemón Pérez Cázares	1965-68

Atlas, May 15, 1968.

APPENDIX D

ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE GRUPO ACCION

Luis N. Morones	Electrician	Federal District
Ezequiel Salcedo	Typographer	Federal District
Celestino Gasca	Shoemaker	Federal District
Juan Rico	Linotypist	Federal District
Ricardo Treviño	Carpenter	Tampico
J. Marcos Tristán	Coal miner	Coahuila
Eduardo Moneda	Photoengraver	Federal District
Juan B. Fonseca	Shoemaker	Federal District
Fernando Rodarte	Typographer	Federal District
Juan Lozano	Shoemaker	Coahuila
José López Cortés	Typographer	Federal District
Reynaldo Cervantes Torres	Carpenter	Oaxaca
Adalberto Polo	Tailor	Federal District
Pedro Suárez		
Pedro Rivera Flores	Molder	Hidalgo
Salvador Álvarez	Tailor	Federal District
Samuel O. Yúdico	Mechanic	Federal District
José F. Gutiérrez		

Clark, Organized Labor in Mexico, 63; Robert J. Alexander interview of José Petricioli, Mexico City, August 27, 1948.

APPENDIX E

CALLES' CABINET

Undersecretary in Charge of Gobernación

Licenciado Romero Ortega

Minister of Finance and Public Credit

Ingeniero Alberto J. Pani

Minister of Foreign Relations

Licenciado Aarón Sáenz

Minister of Communications and Public Works

Coronel Adalberto Tejeda

Undersecretary in Charge of War and Navy

General Joaquín Amaro

Minister of Agriculture and Development

Ingeniero Luis L. León

Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor

Señor Luis N. Morones

Minister of Public Education

Doctor J.M. Puig Casauranc

Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 21.

APPENDIX F

CALLES' EXPLANATION OF HIS EXPULSION FROM MEXICO

A grave attack which violates our constitutional guarantees has been made upon the undersigned. The only reason given by the government for expatriating us is the anarchical conditions which prevail in the country.

General Calles states that the only responsibility for this situation lies with the government itself, which, for more than a year, has been developing a demagogic policy and has been attempting to implant communism. We have done all in our power as citizens to combat this tendency without violating the law.

The expulsion of the labor leader Morones is due to the wish of the government to destroy the Regional Confederation of Labor (CROM) which does not wish to capitulate to the Communist labor organization that supports the government and is headed by Lombardo Toledano.

The desire of the government, whatever declarations it may make to the contrary, is to socialize the machinery of production, disregarding the private property rights that guarantee our institutions, and to establish a collective system in agriculture similar to the Russian system.

We repudiate communism, as we consider it not adaptable to our country and because the Mexican people refuse to accept it.

P. Elias Calles,

Melchor Ortega,

Luis N. Morones,

Luis L. Leon.

New York Times, April 11, 1936. General Calles, when asked by the New York Times on April 10 why he was expelled from Mexico, issued the above statement which he and his companions in exile signed in Brownsville, Texas.

APPENDIX G

Luis N. Morones
México, D.F.

16 de febrero de 1957

Sr. J.W.F.Dulles.
Apartado 251.
Monterrey, N.L.

Muy estimado señor Dulles:

Me refiero a su atenta carta fechada el 7 de los corrientes, la cual no contesté con la premura que debía haberlo hecho, debido a que salí de la ciudad, pero ahora me apresuro a hacerlo de acuerdo con mi ofrecimiento.

La primera pregunta que usted me hizo es la siguiente:

1.- En abril de 1920 el General Obregón fugose de la Ciudad de México después de haberse presentado como testigo en el juicio de Roberto F. Cejudo. Según entiendo el General Obregón se disfrazó de mecánico a fin de efectuar la mencionada escapatoria. De acuerdo con algunas fuentes usted le ayudó a llevar a efecto la multicitada escapatoria. Sería usted tan amable de darme algunos detalles al respecto?.....Es también cierto que algunos otros Obregonistas salieron de la Ciudad de México al mismo tiempo?: el General Hill, Rafael Zubaran Campany, Cutberto Hidalgo y Miguel Alessio Robles.

A esta pregunta me permito informar a usted lo siguiente:

.....el General Obregón salió para Tampico, y en esta plaza se inició en forma precisa, el ataque oficial a la candidatura, hasta el grado de que fue abierto un proceso como usted lo dice, y fue citado por las autoridades militares de México que lo obligaron a presentarse, en dos ocasiones, ante los tribunales del fuero militar.

Al regresar a esta Capital el General Obregón se hospedó en la casa del Licenciado Miguel Alessio Robles, ubicada en las calles de Colima No. 182. En la segunda presencia ante los jueces militares, el General Obregón se dio cuenta de que deseaban aprehenderlo y encarcelarlo con el propósito de inhabilitarlo como

candidato a la Presidencia de la República y no estuviera, desde luego, en aptitud de continuar su campaña electoral. El General Obregón me citó para comunicarme su molestia por la continua vigilancia de que era objeto por parte de la policía, y también me dijo que había tenido una conferencia con Margarito Ramírez conductor del tren que hacía el recorrido de México a Iguala y que se ofreció a ayudarlo a salir de México, cosa que se hizo la madrugada del 12 de abril, en la forma siguiente:

El día 11 de abril de 1920, a las 9 de la noche, salió el General Obregón de la residencia del licenciado Alessio Robles, acompañado del propio licenciado y de Rafael Zubaran Capmany, otra persona cuyo nombre no recuerdo y yo. Ocupamos un automóvil de siete asientos. En la parte de atrás iban sentados el General y los licenciados Zubaran y Alessio. Enfilamos hacia la plaza de Orizaba y con el auto en movimiento saltó el General Obregón ocultándose rápidamente entre los árboles del parque, para abordar el automóvil Ford, placas 5473 que de antemano le tenían preparado Margarito Ramírez y Faustino Gutierrez, éste último garrotero del tren a Iguala. Una vez que el General Obregón subió al auto que lo esperaba, tomó el rumbo de la Colonia Guerrero, y los pasajeros se bajaron en la calle de Camelia, para dirigirse a pie a la casa de Margarito Ramírez que estaba situada en la calle de Magnolia No. 243, letra C. Los motociclistas que nos vigilaban no se dieron cuenta de la maniobra ejecutada por el General Obregón y siguieron persiguiendonos creyendo que el General seguía con nosotros. Terminamos nuestro recorrido en el Café Colón, que estaba ubicado entonces en el Paseo de la Reforma. En este lugar ordenamos que nos fueran servidas unas copas de coñac y en esos momentos la policía hizo irrupción buscando al General Obregón al cual no pudieron, naturalmente, encontrar.

En el citado café acordamos dispersarnos en distintas direcciones los licenciados Alessio Robles, Zubaran y yo, y cerca de las 11 de la noche fui a la calle de Magnolia para recibir instrucciones del General Obregón y para informarle que estaban cumplidos sus encargos y que ya había encontrado un lugar donde pudiera refugiarse el General Benjamín Hill, para burlar la vigilancia de que era objeto por parte de la policía.

Entre los encargos que me hizo fue el cobro de un cheque contra la Comisión Monetaria, en la que me presenté a sabiendas que el General Obregón carecía de fondos en la mencionada Institución, pero después de algunas gestiones logré hacer efectivo el documento que amparaba la cantidad de quinientos pesos, de los cuales adquirí medicinas, pues se encontraba enfermo, una máquina de cortar el pelo porque deseaba disfrazarse un poco y del resto me autorizó a disponer de algo de dinero para dejar a mi familia lo más indispensable, cosa que no hice dado lo reducido de la cantidad.

El lugar donde dejé al General Hill fue la casa del compañero Francisco Castrejón, que se encontraba ubicada en el Jardín de los Mártires de Tacubaya, en San Pedro de los Pinos.

Cuando el General Obregón abandonó la casa de Margarito Ramírez salió con un abrigo puesto, tocado con un sombrero de los que llamaban ferrocarrilero, o de "pedradas", al cuello un paliacate y una linterna en la mano. El objeto de ponerse el abrigo, fue para que no se viera que le faltaba el brazo.

Cuando me separé del General Obregón me dió instrucciones de que me reuniera con él en la ruta de México a Chilpancingo, sin poder precisar el lugar exacto en donde nos encontraríamos.

Al día siguiente o sea el día 13 de abril salí con rumbo a Iguala, para reunirme con el candidato, pero no lo encontré en ese lugar y seguí mi viaje, por tierra, rumbo a Mexcala. En este lugar, se reunió con nosotros el General Obregón, los licenciados Eduardo Neri, Mastache y yó, y decidimos continuar el viaje hacia Chilpancingo.

La segunda pregunta es:

2.- Una fuente me ha informado qué el "Grupo Acción" estaba formado por seis personas. Algunos libros mencionan que dicho Grupo estaba formado por veinte personas. Me podría informar al respecto y quizá también sobre los fines que perseguía el "Grupo Acción"?

Respuesta: El "Grupo Acción" fue constituido por veinte personas, representativas de las agrupaciones obreras en los Estados. Se reunía periódicamente para conocer los problemas que la organización obrera tenía en todos los lugares del país y orientar la lucha sindical dentro del programa que la C.R.O.M. aprobó en su Congreso Constitutivo, celebrado en el mes de mayo de 1918 en la Ciudad de Saltillo. Para narrar el trabajo social que desarrolló este grupo, se necesita disponer de un gran espacio pero baste con decir que fue muy importante y que precisamente a su labor se debió el afianzamiento de las organizaciones obreras en la lucha por su mejoramiento.

La pregunta tres dice así:

3.- Cuáles fueron las razones por las cuales los Jefes del Partido Laborista Mexicano no se entusiasmaron con la propuesta reelección del General Obregón en 1928?

Respuesta: En el espíritu de mis compañeros estaba firmemente cimentado el principio de no reelección, y cuando nos dimos cuenta de que el General Obregón aceptaría su nueva postulación, y de que de no apoyarlo las fuerzas revolucionarias podrían sufrir un quebranto en su unidad, decidimos cooperar para su reelección.

La pregunta cuatro dice así:

4.- Me podría decir algo acerca de la carrera y personalidad del Coronel José G. Preve?

Respuesta: En relación con el Coronel Preve puedo decir a usted que fué un elemento de valía y que prestó sus servicios a la Revolución en Tabasco, en el campo militar; que abrazó la causa obrera en Campeche y que se distinguió por su actividad en ese terreno.

Por lo que se refiere a su carta del día 8, me permito manifestarle que la Secretaría de Industria cambió su nombre ante el imperativo de la Constitución de 1917, que tiene un capítulo dedicado al trabajo, cuya aplicación necesitaba de un órgano gubernamental que reglamentara el precepto referido. Como no existía la Secretaría del Trabajo, la de Industria amplió su radio de acción en este capítulo, creando oportunamente la Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje que tiene por obligación conocer los conflictos de jurisdicción federal. Años más tarde quedó establecido la Secretaría del ramo en substitución del Departamento del Trabajo autónomo, creado en la época del Gobierno del General Calles.

En la seguridad de haber dejado satisfechos sus deseos, me es grato quedar como su atento seguro servidor.

(Signed)

Luis N. Morones

APPENDIX H

A NOTE ON SOURCES

CROM OFFICES, AVENIDA REPUBLICA DE CUBA, NO. 60, MEXICO CITY

The CROM Archive in Mexico City, is virtually unknown to historians of Latin America in the United States, despite the richness of its holdings in labor history. Few North American scholars have used the archives, and there is little in print, either in English or Spanish, that can acquaint one with what documentation is available.

The archive itself is contained in one room, which also doubles for a working area for cromistas. This small, poorly-illuminated room has one long table, a few chairs, and very few other amenities. The walls, from floor to ceiling, are occupied with the archive's holdings; therefore, one looks for data in a random manner. The researcher, when using these documents, must search folio by folio and document by document for information relevant to his period and topic. No formalities are necessary before one may begin to use the archive, and seldom is there any competition for a good seat (near the windows and, hence, the light). Aside from such drawbacks, and the noise from cromistas inside the building, there are few problems.

VITA

Nick Buford, the son of Lena Turano Buford and the late Norvel Buck Buford, was born in Port Arthur, Texas on November 20, 1941. He received his elementary and secondary education in the public schools of Houston, Texas, and graduated from John H. Reagan High School in June, 1960. Entering Lamar State College of Technology in September, 1960, he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from that institution in August, 1964, and Master of Arts in May, 1967, after having had a graduate teaching fellowship.

In February, 1967, Mr. Buford entered Louisiana State University. During the years 1968 to 1971 he was a graduate assistant in the Department of History and Instructor of Latin American History for the Division of Continuing Education, 1969-71. He lived in Puebla de Zaragoza during the summer of 1967 and spent the summer of 1968 and spring of 1971 researching in Mexico.

On December 27, 1969, he was married in Yonkers, New York. The bride, Gloria Herminia Creagh-Larramendi, is the daughter of Dr. Enrique Creagh-Creagh, M.D., and Doctora María Gloria Larramendi Vivar de Creagh from Guantánamo and Santiago de Cuba respectively.

Mr. Buford was awarded an Organization of American States Fellowship to Mexico where he completed his research for his doctoral dissertation in spring, 1971. He is a candidate for the degree Doctor of Philosophy at the August commencement.

EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Nick Buford

Major Field: History

Title of Thesis: "A Biography of Luis N. Morones, Mexican Labor and Political Leader."

Approved:

Jane De Grummond
Major Professor and Chairman

Max Goodrich
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

J. W. Wray
J. L. Loos
Paul Nagle
L. C. ... Jr.

Date of Examination:

May 20, 1971